PlayStation 2 & Saturn 2: Do Sega and Sony really have 64-bit systems waiting in the wings?

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337 GAMES RATED for PlayStation, Nintendo 64, and Saturn

NEXT GENERATION

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Online Gaming Explodes!

***Bomberman* returns!** The world's best multiplayer game is set to ignite online gaming on the PC

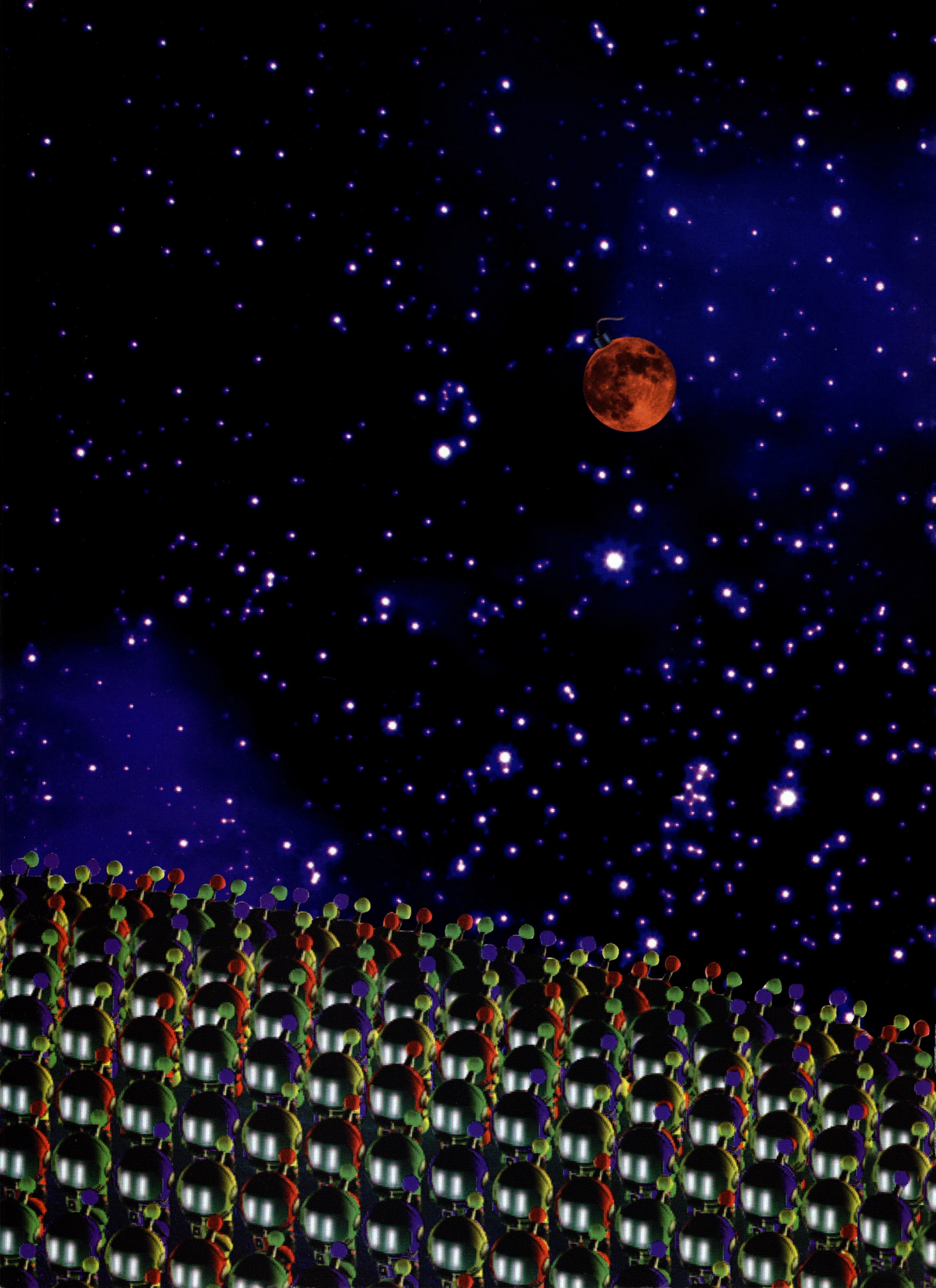
PLUS! 10 BEST ONLINE GAMES & THE BEST 10 PLACES TO PLAY

In NG 21's "Top 100 Games of All Time" *Super Bomberman 2* for the Super NES ranked #2. We said, "Four players won't have more fun doing anything else," and we meant it. Interplay now plans to bring the magic of *Bomberman* to the online PC world. The full, exclusive story begins in page 48

volume three
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DreamWorks: Great at PR, crap at making games. Can *Lost World* change all this?



Is the Online Gaming Revolution already Over?

Super Bomberman 2 may be the **only** reason to still own a Super NES — but only if you can find **three friends to play with** (the one-player version is a cruel joke). **Now,** Interplay is bringing it to the PC, as a **fully Internet-compatable, multiplayer version**. PC gamers will **finally** get to play what is possibly **the best multiplayer game ever.** That's a **big** deal.

What isn't a big deal, to most gamers, is the **technology that drives the online, multiplayer components** of the game. The online gaming revolution isn't coming, **it's here**. The **inclusion of online multiplayer options** is no longer **a novelty** — it's a neccessity.

The **computer game industry** has recognized this **new reality,** and everyone, it seems, wants in on the action — from **start-ups** like MPath or TEN to **established players** like InterPlay or Origin.

What's **cool** and what's just **hype?** There are so many different outfits offering basically the **same services** that one could waste **days** trying them out, **without ever playing a single game.** In our **in-depth** report, we give you the **low down** on the top 10 places to play games online. It **starts** on page 32.

Due to space limitations, this month's retrogaming feature has been delayed until April. We apologize for the delay, but it will let us present more in-depth and thorough coverage.



NEXT GENERATION

NEXT GENERATION

March 1997

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Next Generation shares editorial with the U.K.-based magazine **EDGE** and is not affiliated with NeXT Software, Inc. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. Lo siento, Dunphy. Da German editor says we must salute Italian captains. Bye Mr. Pink! Lewis, #1* P.S. Wired, you're welcome for the Yarooze story. Next month: Vole-a-Rama!

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Is Richard Garriott really building a better world?

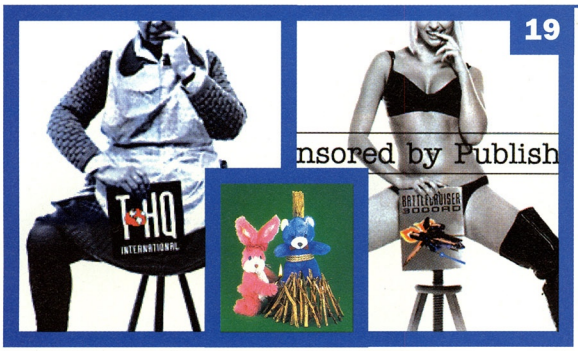
RIchard Garriott's obsession with Britannia helped him create the *Ultima* series (the ultimate RPG to many gamers). Lord British is creating a virtual world and putting it online. He shares his gaming insights with **Next Generation**



32

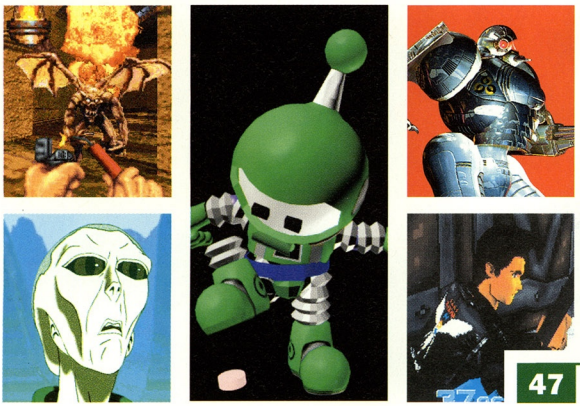
Top 10 Online Gaming Sites

Online, multiplayer gaming is *huge*. So huge, in fact, that it is difficult to know where to go or what to play. **Next Generation**'s survey of the online gaming jungle will show you what's hot and what's hype



News

Shock Tactics in British game advertisements • 3Dfx specs • New PlayStations • Arcadia: coin-ops and arcades get busted for noncompliance with game ratings • Plus, all the regulars...



Alphas: 9 games previewed

Your chance to check out games before they're even finished, including: *Bomberman*, *Lost World*, *Pegasus Prime*, *The Dark Project* — and a special interview with Warren Spector of Looking Glass



Finals: 31 games reviewed

We do the work for you. Every month, **NG** reviews each and every major new game release, so you know which are killer and which should be taken out and shot

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Is Richard Garriott really building a better world?
Ultima Online looks set to be more than just a game. So how is Lord British building his brave new world?

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Top 10 Online Gaming Sites
Do you get your TEN, MPG, and DWANGO confused? Not sure where to go for your deathmatch fix? We untangle the web of online gaming for you in our special survey of the top 10 online gaming sites and the top 10 online games

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Alphas
Previewed this month: *Bomberman* (Online), *Myth* (PC CD-ROM), *Need for Speed* (PC, PlayStation), *Flying Saucer* (PC CD-ROM), *Time Crisis* (PlayStation), *Blood* (PC), *Lost World* (PlayStation)

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Finals
The games you should skip, the games worth a look, and the ones to cherish. Including: *Jet Moto*, *Virtua Cop 2*, *Gameday '97*, *Virtua Fighter 3*, *Phantasmagoria: A Puzzle of Flesh*, *Area 51*, *Space Jam*, *Virtual Pool*, *Persona Revelations*, *Re-Loaded*, *Nanotek Warrior*, *Rocket Jockey*

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Letters
Well, what can we say? Four-letter words won't help us out much anymore...

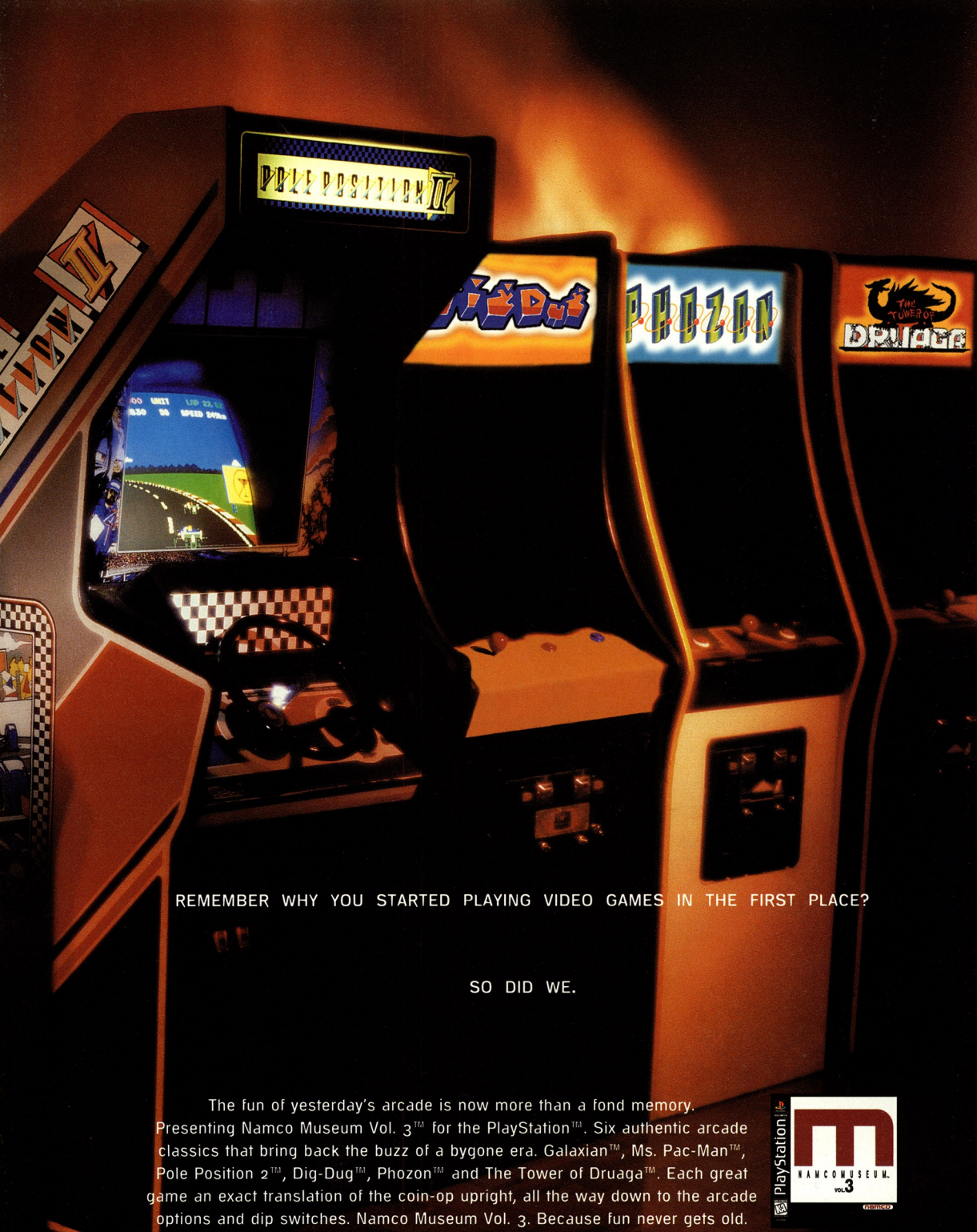
76 now hiring

Forget the career counselor! Take our advice: Become a professional gaming geek

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Next month...
Next Generation #28 arrives on newsstands on March 11. Turn to the insert on page 64 to subscribe


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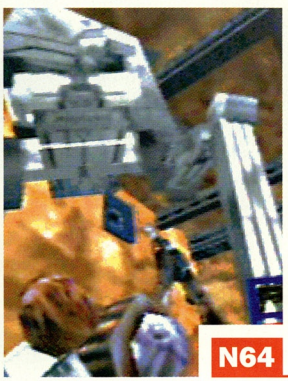
Some of you are lucky, and some aren't. Each month, we publish two editions of **Next Generation** — one has a disc with it, and the other doesn't. If you picked the **Disc Edition** (you're lucky if you did), then everything you see on this page awaits you. If you didn't buy the disc edition, well you still have a chance — next time you can get yourself a disc edition. If you're not getting the CD-ROM edition and would like to, please call 1-888-446-2446 to order it.

The Next Generation Disc is compatible with both Mac and PC computer systems, and contains over 600MB of game demos, previews, and movies. Some games are selceted by us, and some are provided by our sponsors: if you see green text outlining information about the game before the movie plays, you know it's a game handpicked by our editorial teams.

We hope you enjoy the **Next Generation Disc**, and invite your feedback. E-mail us at ugp_ng_discs@imagine-inc.com. Your feedback is important because it will help us keep the quality of our discs at the standard we know our sagacious readers demand of CD-ROMs.

So crack open the disc and enjoy.

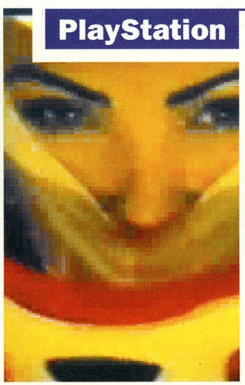




PC demos and movies

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PlayStation, Sega Saturn, and N64 movies

Want to check out the best PlayStation, Sega Saturn, and Nintendo 64 games before they hit the store shelves? Then look at these exclusive movies of real, pre-release gameplay

4 **Mac** demos

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11 **PC** demos

Featuring:
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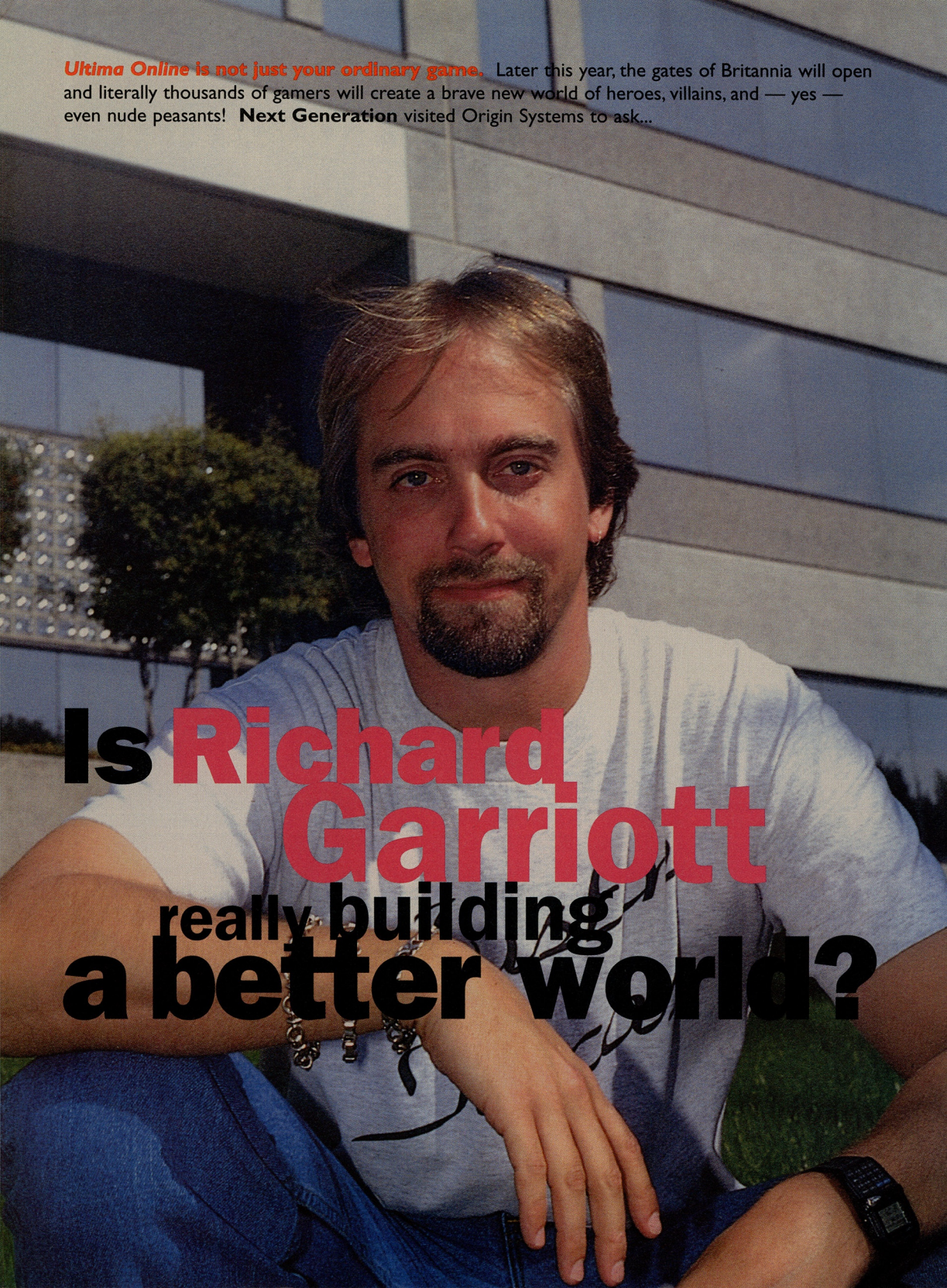






NanoTek Warrior™

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***Ultima Online* is not just your ordinary game.** Later this year, the gates of Britannia will open and literally thousands of gamers will create a brave new world of heroes, villains, and — yes — even nude peasants! **Next Generation** visited Origin Systems to ask...

Is Richard Garriott really building a better world?



Of all the online games and projects currently grabbing headlines (and boy, there are a lot of them) the most exciting has to be *Ultima Online*. *UOL* is nothing less than a totally self-contained world (larger, in fact, than any *Ultima* world constructed so far) accessible over the net, ready to be inhabited by literally thousands of virtual citizens. The founder of the Britannia Universe and at the helm of all things *Ultima* is Richard Garriott (a.k.a. Lord British), and **Next Generation** caught up with him to find out more about the game that many pundits believe could be the most compelling "virtual world" yet.

More than just a game?

NG: *Ultima Online* looks destined to be the nearest thing yet to a "virtual world" ever created. It has an economy, an ecology, will be populated by thousands of people, and is always "on." So is it just a game, or do you see it as something bigger?

Richard: It is both a game and much more. It could be seen as a social environment — and, indeed, some of our competitors are creating nothing more than elaborate, thematic chat zones where you can also go beat up on each other. But it was very important to us that *Ultima Online* be a game with a theme, and story, and quest — and then support larger, grander activity. We don't want it to be just player controlled and dominated, we want it to be an *Ultima* experience, with all the qualities that people expect from that.

Ultima Online will be, I believe, the very first ever, completely virtual world for the mass public to go live out alternate lives in.

NG: Many online projects attempt to recreate online versions of cafes or bars — places where people like to come and just hang out. But many of these projects fail to provide an online alternative of what it is that really keeps cafes and bars full of people: the coffee or beer. Do you in any way regard the game elements of *Ultima Online* as the "beer" or "coffee" that will entice people through the doors, with a view to them then wanting just to hang out?

Richard: Right — but it's not divided like that. One of the "coffee-" or "beer-" like items we're trying to create is a feeling that you're in an alternate world, even when you're socializing, you're still in the game and you never quite know what's going to happen. You may be chatting to someone in a bar, and you may overhear some of the nonplayer characters talking about a dragon that's attacking a nearby village. So maybe you'll end up on a quest to slay the dragon.

NG: But socializing is definitely an important part of the proceedings?

Richard: I can give you a cryptic answer. If you look outside of *Ultima*-style of RPGs (which I think are quite sophisticated in their presentation and in their depth) and look at something like *Duke Nukem Online*, then yeah — you go through 60 seconds of bashing people, but then what? There has to be more — and that is the social interaction. And it's the same when I play *Command & Conquer* online — the main reason I enjoy it is because when I play it's always with someone I know down the corridor, and I can go and gloat afterwards.

"One of the unfortunate side effects of computer gaming is that we have a whole generation of kids who have no social graces"

This is a very important aspect of why these games are fun. And this is why I think that the action games that are going online via TEN or Mpath or wherever — they're not the future of online gaming. I mean, how many strangers do you need to play against? The cool part about *Ultima Online* is that by its nature it is social, and not just head-to-head combat. During the alpha test, one of the first people I ran into was this guy from Sweden, and we had communication issues



to deal with, but once we had dealt with it was extra cool to go adventuring together.

The difference between us and these other online games is that *Ultima Online* is social in nature — you actually talk to people while playing the game. With games like *Quake*, you're alternating between being in the game or out of the game.

Getting to know your enemy

NG: Do you think civilized social interaction will occur?

Richard: One of the unfortunate side effects of computer gaming is that we have a whole generation of kids who have no social graces whatsoever. And this is exemplified in my mind by how much I hate going online for discussions I am invited to do once a month or so. And I truly abhor going to do that for a variety of reasons, one because it's such a slow experience but also because everyone has a level of anonymity behind their online persona, they lose their normal good and proper etiquette. So you have people screaming over each other to get their

"You can be nototorious because you're a great, heroic, 'kill the dragon' kind of guy, or you can be the bandit who rapes and pillages"

questions in, people screaming expletives, people popping in to a chat room and making some dumb comment and then popping out again — the kind of behavior that you would never get away with in the real world. So one of the things that I'm really keen to introduce with *Ultima Online* is making people responsible for their actions, and this will happen as people are recognized by their online persona within the game. They won't be so anonymous any more.

NG: So what have been the major problems that you've had to solve in trying to create this virtual world?

Richard: One of the big problems has been trying to present activity for thousands of people to participate in simultaneously; activity that is more meaningful than just a random collection of monsters and treasure. Presenting numerous players with exciting and meaningful side-quests is a truly tricky proposition, especially when we need to make sure that the side-quests interact with each other and force people to participate together — whether they team-up or find themselves on opposite sides of an issue. And I think that this is a challenge that will still be present for the years *Ultima Online* remains operational.

NG: How big a problem is it that not everyone can be king? All computer and videogame players have got used to the idea of being the main hero in each game that they play. But obviously, in a world like *Ultima Online* with thousands of players, this can't happen. Is it going to cause a problem when players realize that perhaps for the first time, the game world isn't revolving around them?

Richard: Certainly I think different people will be happy to take different roles. Lots of people will say, "Gee, what'd I'd like to do is set up a shop and buy and trade goods myself," and so we are going to facilitate that, and they can become shopkeepers. But as a percentage of the overall population, you're right — I don't think most people want that kind of a job. Most people will want to believe that they are playing a pivotal role in the success or failure of the grand scheme of things, as the main character in any adventure novel.

NG: So isn't there a danger that there will be too many kings and not enough peasants?

Richard: Don't forget that the world is already supplied with what we'll call a "peasantry" of computer-controlled characters. Not only are all shops and things run by peasants, but players can do things like hire on guards, and even have pets. So all the human players will already be advanced out of that bottom echelon of society.

NG: OK, but supposing that's not good enough for a player. How can he or she try and become a king?

Richard: Imagine the following potential scenario. There will be structures out in the wilderness, we'll call it a "keep" and it's a structure that humans may decide that they want for themselves. Initially, the keep will be filled with monsters, and monsters in the future will see it as a desirable habitat to live in, based upon the ecology we have running in the game. So, basically, monsters will continually be trying to reinhabit it.

A group of players will find it difficult to clean it out of monsters, initially. And if they want to keep it clean, and establish it as a stronghold for players to maintain as a group, then it is going to take a very well organized group of individuals to maintain a defense around that structure sophisticated enough to prevent the monsters from retaking it over.

So it's going to take an individual player, a player who has the organizational ability to rally masses to the cause of making sure that at every point time there are enough people in the group online to maintain this

physical environment. And we think that not only will true leaders naturally evolve out of this situation, but that everyone on the team will feel part of the accomplishment as one of the "nobles" who is holding this castle by being present, hiring guards, arranging things, and encouraging other people to be there — so everyone will feel that they play a meaningful role without necessarily having to feel that they are the one and only King.

NG: Were this example to happen, would the game acknowledge this individual's status as a king, or a lord, or whatever? Or would he or she just have to make do with the recognition and respect of his peers?

Richard: At this time I don't think we have any automatic recognition of this — people can call themselves what they want to. But what we do have is a "notoriety meter" which goes positive or negative. So you can be notorious because you're a great, heroic, "save the day and kill the dragon" kind of guy, or you can be notorious for being the bandit in the woods who rapes and pillages all the time. Now, all the nonplayer characters in the game will react to you according to that notoriety — whether it's positive or negative. So if you've earned this reputation of being this powerful king, then the computer players will act accordingly.

Additionally, there will be Origin employees online in the game world portraying characters in the game — major characters that have roles to play in the backplot of the game. I, for example, will play Lord British. And these characters will have the ability to tell other people that someone else has been knighted, or, say, named a lord.

NG: Obviously, different people will join in *Ultima Online* at different times. How are you dealing with the issue of first-time novice players having to compete in a game world with expert players?

Richard: We've tried to make the cities in Brtiannia very safe — a guard on every corner, that kind of idea. If someone tries to pursue such activities as killing and thievery within a city, then he or she will be attacked by guards. So as a new player you automatically start in a safe city, and will be protected from victimization by other players by the city's guards.

Another thing to note is that we're not using a level-based system to rate players. The level system goes back to the D&D games in which some players can become so powerful that just one touch from their fingers can kill — and this creates a definite disparagement between the high-level characters and the novices. So instead, *Ultima Online* is skill-based so there will never be so much of a disparity between different player's physical strengths.

NG: So as players' skills increase, and they fell a little braver, they can venture out from the cities?

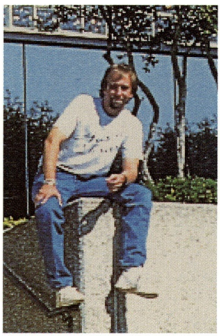
Richard: Right. Think of the following structure: The principal cities are very safe, and then the major roads that link the main cities are fairly safe, and then the smaller roads are a little less safe, and then you have the badlands where anything goes and where players can set up their own evil empires. So all players will know where the dangerous parts of the world are, and then explore according to how much danger they want to encounter.

Keeping clothes on...

NG: So what other functions does the game's "police" provide?

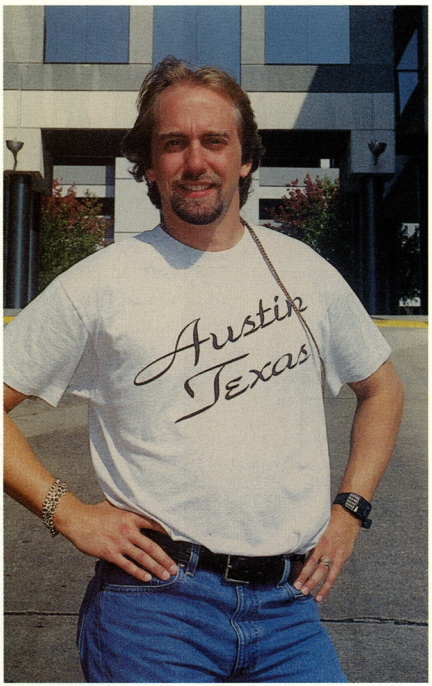
Richard: We actually had to program them to stop players from running around naked!

When we started the alpha test it turned out that by a freak of the way the game operated, when people died they came back to life naked. Of course, there were lots of clothes that were made available to them, but it turned out that a lot of people got a kick from running around in the game world naked. And since we are trying to create a pretend world — and not necessarily somewhere for all players to do just what they want to do — it's reasonable to assume that public nudity should be frowned upon. So this became another thing that the computer guards had to look





Origin Systems's world builders taking a break in the sunshine outside the company's Austin HQ



out for and try to prevent.

NG: There must be a fine line between making sure that the game world remains faithful to the theme, and giving players enough freedom to make their own fun. Certainly, you have to leave doors open for players to find ways to enjoy themselves in ways that perhaps you hadn't anticipated. How do you walk this line?

Richard: The way to do it is to think about the flavor of the environment that we're trying to build. Even in the traditional single-player *Ultima* games, when we would create a puzzle — say, for example, there would be something valuable behind a locked door and we would take the keys to that door and bury them somewhere in the castle. But we try to build the physics of the world so that people can come up with their own solutions. So, in the example of the locked door, it would also be possible — if it were a wooden door — to hack through it with your ax, or — if it were a steel door — perhaps you could find a powder keg and blast through it. Or you could use magic, whatever. So there are many layers of solutions. But as long as everything is consistent to the theme of world, then anything goes.

But, for example, players will try to do everything they can to be as unique as possible within the game world — starting from their own personal name, and we know that not all of the names will be medieval English! And then clothes, skin tones, and hairstyles will be very difficult for us to control. So the challenge to us is to encourage players to participate and add to the theme that we wish, and giving them enough freedom to be creative with this, without letting them be destructive to the theme.

"I think it will be quite some time — if ever — before multiplayer gaming replaces solo gaming. They are two different experiences"

I mean, I'm looking forward to people experimenting with the game world and trying to kill Lord British — as long as it's done thematically.

NG: Does it matter in this virtual world that the full spectrum of society isn't represented? A city full of just traditional computer game players certainly doesn't cover the full spectrum of class, race, sex, and age. Is this a problem?

Richard: Don't forget that just in the same way that we will have NPCs to be guards and peasants, we can have NPCs to be burger flippers or whatever other social demographics aren't represented by real players.

But I think it's important to note that before it's even launched, *Ultima Online* has gone from being publicly perceived as a cool fun game for *Ultima* fans, to a cool fun game for anyone who likes online stuff, and now it's even gone beyond that. Since the day we started the project, our projections for how many people will be interested in playing has increased by two orders of magnitude. And with all these people playing, we're bound to have a good cross section of personalities and demographics.

But sure, we don't anticipate getting this right first time. We're fully aware that we're going to learn a lot of really tough lessons very quickly. We're planning for this and have a lot of staff who are standing by ready to update things very quickly.

Coming and going

NG: Another intangible that you have to deal with is that you have no control over how many people play at any one time, and that at some times the world will be considerably more heavily populated than at other times. Will these drastic and constant population changes have any implications for the player?

Richard: Well first of all, we believe that we understand the statistics of who will be playing when. And we know how the peak times and slow times work, so we can cater for the ebb and flow of people — which we believe will be a maximum ratio of ten to one. But we don't think that the gameplay style will be affected by this.

But let me also mention that if there's a trend over time that the number of subscribers grows rapidly, then we have to accommodate this growth in the world's economy. Supposing the number of people in the world doubles, but the total wealth in the world remains constant, then everyone's net wealth has just halved — and this will make the game less fun, so we have to make sure that the economy grows with it.

NG: Do you think that as multiplayer games grow and thrive, that solo games — in the traditional sense — will increasingly seem like lonely, isolated experiences? Will multiplayer online games replace traditional games?

Richard: I think it will be quite some time — if ever – before multiplayer gaming replaces solo gaming.

Solo games and online games are very different in what they're trying to do. Solo games are trying to be like a novel or a movie in as much as you are given the role of a main character, and you have the epic journey — no one else does. But with an online game, it is more of a huge, grand, wonderful place to go on vacation. They are two different experiences.

NG: What excites you most about this project?

Richard: It's on the Internet and so that means it's happening on a worldwide basis. And I think it's going to be really cool when you meet new people from all over the world — and even bump into old friend that maybe you haven't heard from in years — and go off and have a cool adventure together...

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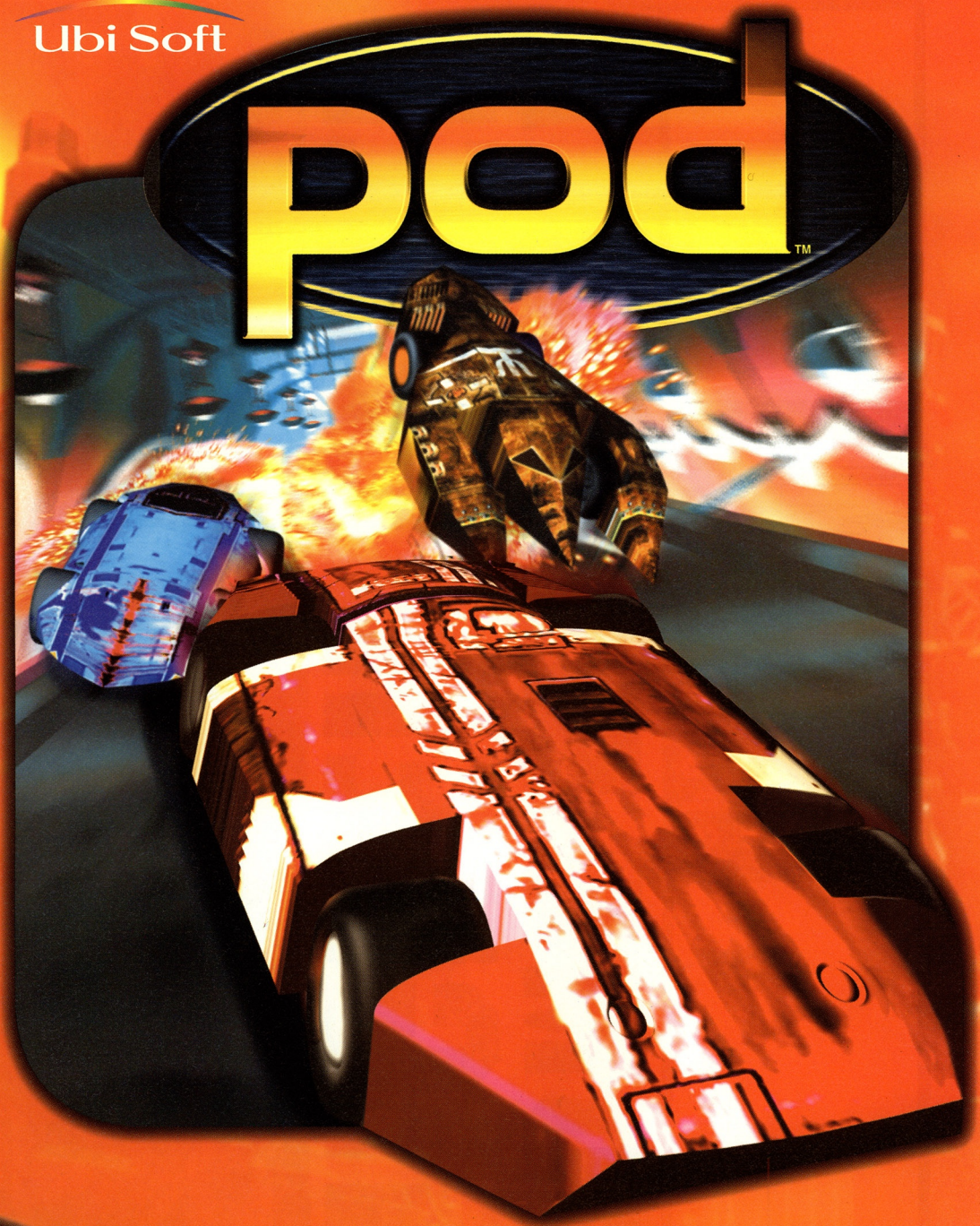
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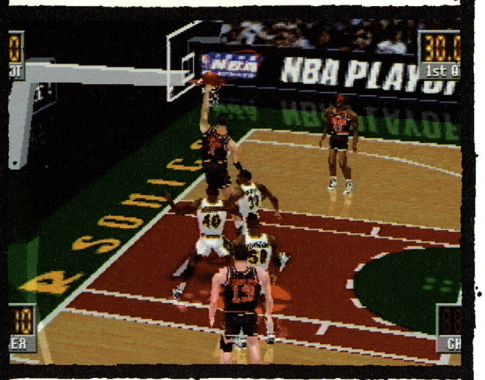


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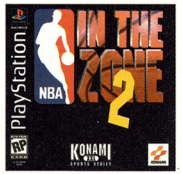


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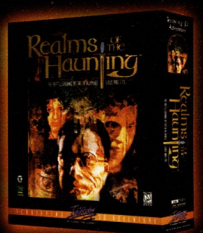


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Videogame news from north, south, east, and west

Videogames continue to shock the system

On both sides of the Atlantic, the powers that be find fault with the videogame industry

As reported last month, Senator Joe Lieberman is still not happy with the game industry's handling of violent content. It's an issue that continues to dog videogame makers around the world, and with the threat of governmental intervention still looming, it's an issue that is unlikely to go away.

But a new uproar has exploded in Europe that once again concerns the videogame industry's morale code — and that is the issue surrounding the content of videogame advertsing. Look at the some of the European ads on this page and you'll see that some of the content goes far beyond — in terms of explicit graphic content, and political imagery — anything seen in the U.S. But the links between the two continents remain close, and many industry watchers predict that some of these aggressive ad campaigns could well find themselves brought (or at least, imitated) over here.

Videogames have never been entirely popular with the U.K.'s moral guardians, as upheld by the country's tabloid newspapers. *The Daily Mail* ran a story in 1993 which described *Night Trap* as a "SEGA SICKENER" while *The News of the World* recently ran the headline "VIRTUAL REALITY TRAPPED OUR SON IN A HORROR WORLD," referring to the coin-op, *Cruis'n USA*.

Now the videogame industry is back in the media spotlight, only this time it's advertising that's getting all the bad press. The Advertising Standards Authority claims that complaints over videogame ads have reached record levels following a number of recent "shocking" ads from the likes of Virgin, Gametek, Interplay, and Hasbro Interactive.

But this isn't the first time "offensive" ads have made the mainstream media. Last year Virgin had its knuckles rapped over an ad for PC racing game *Screamer*, which featured a burnt-out car wreckage below the slogan, "Every Christmas the roads are full of mad men. Join them." Its billboard ads for *Command & Conquer* included pictures of several dictators along with the headline "Previous High Scorers" — another campaign that caused public outcry.

At the time, many of Virgin's ads were deemed witty. Now, though, some are claiming that the shock-tactics situation has become unnecessarily epidemic, with almost every publisher trying its hand. Interplay has featured a teddy bear with its guts hanging out in an ad for *Disruptor*, Gametek recently used nude-model Joanne Guest straddling a copy of *Battle Cruiser 3000*, and Studio 3DO even went so far as to use a pair of bull's testicles in a recent campaign. In fact, an entire culture seems to be growing around the "shock" phenonema: Konami recently "paid homage" to Virgin's brilliant *Resident Evil* ad (see picture, top) with its own bath-full-of-blood campaign for *Project Overkill* and T•HQ has run an ad parodying Gametek's nude (see picture, left).

Nowadays it seems a U.K. ad is shocking if it *doesn't* feature semi-naked girls, xenophobia, or cuddly teddies with bullet wounds. How long will it be until U.S. gamers feel the same way?



Banning *all* videogame ads would be like throwing the baby out with the bath water

What is it?

This overtly multimedia-conscious 32-bit entertainment system was a major-scale launch from one of the world's biggest electronics companies. Despite massive funding, it flopped



with games as as thes



Parodies of risque ads are funnier than the originals



Even xenophobic ads are used in Britain

3Dfx reveals new high-end PC accelerator

The Obsidian XS-100 offers power to accelerate PC systems to their highest level to date

The Obsidian attracted attention as a highly attractive coin-op solution

The company responsible for the highly impressive Voodoo graphics chipset, 3Dfx, has announced a new state-of-the-art board to head the company's Obsidian range of professional real-time PC graphics accelerators. According to 3Dfx, Obsidian XS-100 is the highest-performance graphics accelerator in existence.

The product certainly sounds powerful. 3Dfx claims a trilinear fill-rate performance on par with Real3D Pro 1000 or SGI Impact, and this is in a PC-based solution which, as Ross Smith, general manager of 3Dfx Interactive's System Products Division points out, "costs $5,000 instead of $50,000."

As with other 3Dfx graphics initiatives, the XS-100 is based around 3Dfx's basic Voodoo chipset — the same one found in consumer boards like Orchid's Righteous 3D. As Smith explains, "We designed the Voodoo graphics architecture to span the entire range of the real-time 3D market — from the PC games enthusiast to coin-op systems to simulations." However, unlike the consumer 3Dfx boards which use just one Pixel FX (graphics controller) unit and one Texel FX (texture processing) unit, the XS-100 features four Texel and two Pixel units. Therefore, it boasts three times the trilinear fill-rate performance of consumer boards.

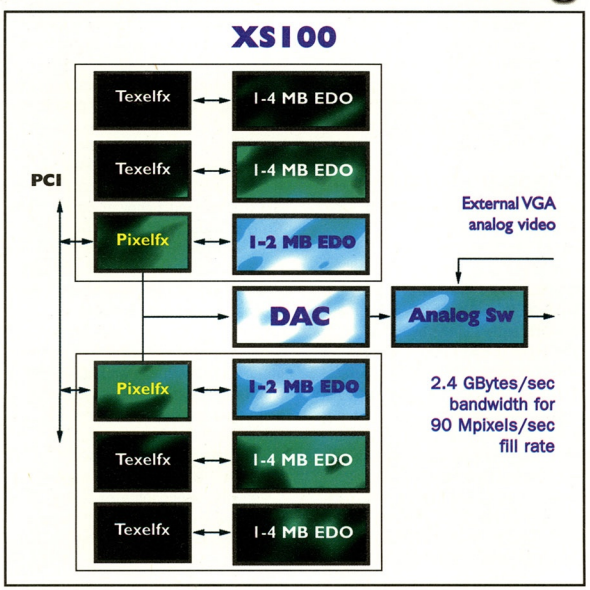
Given this higher performance (and the higher price), the main customers are expected to be military and civilian sim developers. 3Dfx hopes these users will employ PCs with XS-100 instead of more expensive workstations.

Although sim developers are cited as the main target for XS-100, the arcade has been an important part of 3Dfx's gameplan since the Voodoo chipset was first developed, and it's unlikely that this area will be neglected with the new Obsidian board. The original Obsidian, announced in March '96, soon attracted attention as a highly attractive coin-op solution, mainly because of its status as a customizable, low-cost scaleable system.

No coin-op developer has yet pledged support for the XS-100, but, considering its power and the popularity of previous Obsidian technology, it probably won't be long before it happens. ng

It is...

The Philips CD-i. Once upon a time considered a major component in the multimedia revolution, the unit now languishes in the same pit occupied by the 3DO



Obsidian specs

Custom features
- 100 megapixel-per-second, trilinear filtered texture mapping
- 4MB of frame effective buffer memory
- 8MB of effective texture memory
- Trilinear fill rate performance online with Real3D Pro 1000 or SGI Impact

Basic 3D features
- Perspective correction
- Sub-pixel and sub-texel correction
- Depth buffering
- Alpha blending
- Tri/bilinear filtering

Advanced Voodoo features
- Environment mapping
- Texture morphing
- Texture animation
- Video texture mapping
- Per pixel fog

Obsidian pro

3Dfx has also recently revealed details about another Obsidian card, this time aimed at artists who use 3DStudio and 3DStudio Max. The Obsidian Pro, complete with 3DS plug-ins, should be released in the first quarter of 1997.
For more info visit http://www.3dfx.com



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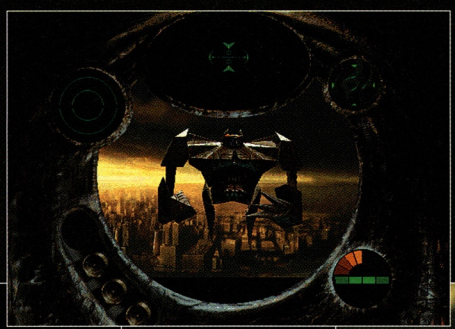


"MDK promises 3-D technology so cool and action so...realistic that it will send everything else running for cover."
– PC GAMER

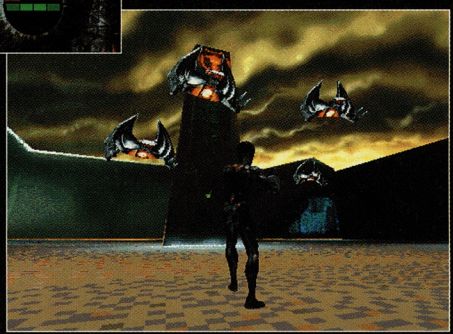
"One of the most innovative games ever created."
– GAMEFAN

ON A GOOD DAY, ONLY 2.5

"There are too many innovations...to list here."
– COMPUTER PLAYER





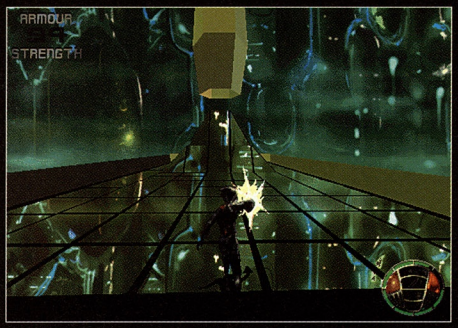


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Saturn/PS-X sequels

Early details of plans for PlayStation 2 & Saturn 2 give gamers a glimpse of the future

Respected sources have given **Next Generation** possible specs for the Saturn 2 and PlayStation 2, giving tantalizing, albeit vague, technical information. This represents the most reliable rumors we've heard.

The 64-bit PlayStation follow-up is allegedly being developed in the west coast of the U.S. by former members of Argonaut. The new hardware allegedly uses a four-speed CD-ROM drive and has a larger RAM capacity than the existing PlayStation. It's said the machine will include a custom R4000 chip and will also be able to play DVDs (digital video discs). Because of the success of the PlayStation, the PlayStation 64 is unlikely to appear before 1998, and, to encourage upgrading and maintain customer loyalty, it's likely to be compatible with the 32-bit machine.

Details on the Saturn 2 are more sketchy at this stage, but the console is said to be designed to utilize either a six- or eight-speed CD-ROM drive and have a modem built in, which would certainly be in line with Sega's current determination to promote the Saturn as a communication machine as well as a gaming console. Prices are currently unavailable for either machine, obviously.

Further hardware upgrades to the existing Saturn and PlayStation systems should in 1997. Sega is developing an add-on board for the Saturn so owners will be able to play a respectable version of *Virtua Fighter 3*. This will probably take the form of a PowerPC board that will enable the Saturn to simulate Sega's Model 3 technology.

Meanwhile, Sony has announced a new white PlayStation with a matching white joypad, specifically for the Southeast Asian market. The major difference between it and existing PlayStations is its ability to play MPEG CDs using a chipset developed by specialist compression firm Xing. The market for MPEG movies is vast in some Asian countries with feature films, anime, and pornography all delivered on the format, and Sony feels the white PlayStation will give it a share of this lucrative market. The machine will also include extra chip-based security in an attempt to curb the piracy that is rampant in certain Asian territories.

It is set for a spring release with a possible price tag of $279. ng



The new white PlayStation has been made specifically for the Southeast Asian Market. It plays MPEG CDs and includes chip-based security to curb piracy that is so rampant in Asia these days

The market for MPEG movies is vast in some Asian countries with feature films, anime, and pornography all delivered on the format

In the studio

So who's working on what? And what's on time, and what's been delayed? A Next Generation look behind the scenes...

The catch-22 situation faced by all game developers looking to introduce something a little different to arcade gaming has taken another step in the cycle. Arcade machine distribution outfit Worldwide Video Entertainment has completed a study of arcade use in the U.S. and has discovered that 70% of arcade players are teenage males. No wonder, then, that so many games are designed to appeal to the tastes of teenage males. The survey also concluded that the average videogame coin-op machine in America earns $48 per week, income from coin-op arcade machines will top $1.1 billion in the U.S. in 1996, there are nearly 450,000 machines in the U.S., and coin-ops can be found in 320,000 locations across the country.

Origin has scrapped two game projects early in development with the loss of 20 jobs. Both games — neither of which had been publicized yet — were found to lacking. This move typifies a trend within the whole game industry right now, with most publishers refusing to continue work on anything but "A" titles. The age when mediocre games could be published on a "you never know, they might be a surprise hit" basis is long gone. This is good in some ways (obviously), but it also reduces the chances of highly experimental, innovative games getting a green light for publication.



As we predicted, the Saturn version of *Virtua Fighter 3* will come with the option of a plug-in cartridge, according to sources in Japan. The 3D accelerator will plug into the cart port at the back and will be used to approximate *VF 3*'s graphical excellence to Model 3 arcade standards.

Russia has become the latest territory to be targeted by Sony for PlayStation. The company has shipped the first 3,000 units into Moscow, and is aiming for a long-term installed base in "six-figures." Sony has already launched PlayStation in most other eastern European territories including Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. It is not known if Sony is planning to release any new games tailored for the Russian gaming population. *Red Alert*, anyone?



Game design legend Peter Molyneux has admitted publicly for the first time that *Dungeon Keeper* could well be his last project with Bullfrog. Bullfrog's parent company EA had dismissed rumors of Molyneux's departure earlier in the year, but the man who founded Bullfrog before its sale to EA says it could be time to move on: "*Dungeon Keeper* is undoubtedly one of the best games I've ever worked on and that's important because I don't know if I'll be working any more for Bullfrog after this." New World Computing is to release an expansion pack for Heroes of *Might and Magic 2*. The 3DO Company-owned firm says PC owners should expect the pack — featuring new scenarios and challenges — by the middle of 1997.

Single Trac Entertainment announced a strategic partnership with Microsoft. The plan, from the company which brought you *Twisted Metal*, *Jet Moto*, and *Warhawk*, is to develop and distribute PC software. This is part of Single Trac's ambition to reposition itself as a publisher, as well as a developer, of games.

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CONSOLE CAN
TAKE IT ~ CAN YOU

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EACH WITH THEIR OWN
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BURN THROUGH FIVE
DEATH-DEFYING
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GHOST RACE AGAINST
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Arcadia

All the latest arcade and coin-op news

by **Marcus Webb**

Marcus Webb is the editor-in-chief of *RePlay* magazine, the leading U.S. trade amusement magazine



Arcade Games **Graded "D"** on **Ratings** Compliance

"You guys can talk the talk, but you sure ain't walking the walk." In effect, that was the message to arcades and game factories from a Dec. 5 press conference on Capitol Hill. U.S. Senators Joe Lieberman and Herb Kohl — who have spearheaded the drive for game ratings — joined the National Institute on Media & the Family, in issuing a "national report card" on the videogame industry's compliance (or lack thereof) with voluntary game ratings.

Console game makers got an "A" for putting ratings on games. Rental and retail sales outlets got a "C" for enforcement. But the guardians of public virtue told arcades and coin-op game factories to go stand in the corner: the industry received a "D" for self-rating efforts by the factories, and another "D" for support and enforcement by arcades.

The report card warned parents to look out for a "dirty dozen" games high on kids' Christmas lists — mostly former arcade hits like *Mortal Kombat* and *Virtua Fighter 2*. Senator Lieberman called the current games "more violent, more anti-social, and more disgusting than ever." Today's games, he added, "communicate the message that killing is cool and viciousness is a virtue."

One longtime member of an arcade industry trade association privately admitted, "Frankly, we do deserve a D." The problem is that many of the games come from Japan, where factory heads simply don't like being dictated to and where radically different cultural sensibilities make media violence no big deal. American industry members continue pleading with Japan to put ratings in attract modes. Meantime, they're moving to put more ratings stickers on arcade game cabinets. This last move is a stop-gap ploy, but the arcades figure it's better than nothing. At all costs, they want to head off a blanket ban on violent games that could choke off the industry's most profitable segment.

Konami: Sssmokin'!

Coming to London's ATEI trade show in January and America's ASI trade show in Las Vegas in March, Konami is tearing up the track with *GTI Club*, a driving simulator using its "Scorpion" system which was developed in-house by Konami Japan. The game comes in a few different versions: a large deluxe one-player sitdown will pop up in leading arcades in February, a dual sitdown follows, and a single-player standard sitdown version arrives in March.

Race action takes souped-up street machines through the French Riviera, with wild "shortcuts" through tunnels, back alleys, and so on. Three levels of difficulty are offered, including an extremely hard course that makes you drive the route in reverse, looking at the rearview mirror! A unique "hot potato" feature has drivers tossing a live bomb back and forth from car to car — you don't want this package on board when the alarm clock rings.

Sega's Tops — on **Home** Turf

Over in Japan, Sega's spectacular new fighting game *Virtua Fighter 3* zoomed to the top of the arcade charts almost right away. However, we hear players in the Land of the Rising Sun could find this amazing unit almost exclusively in arcades owned by Sega itself. That should change soon. Despite the game's very expensive price tag, players will demand the top-charted game in arcades owned by Namco, Taito, and everyone else. Here in the U.S., the game's quality will ensure a decent distribution, despite price resistance. One independent U.S. arcade owner told us: "I bought *VF3* without looking at the price because I have to have an attraction. My players demand it, period." Still, if you find this one with higher play pricing, now you'll know why.

Viva la **Networked** Video!

Jacob Schemaria hardly looks older than a college kid (although he's better dressed). He *is* hardly older than a college kid. But youthful Jacob is the C.E.O. of Latin America's biggest videogame company, Mexel, based in Guadalajara, Mexico. Mexel just happens to own Latin America's largest arcade chain, "Diversiones Moy." Jacob and his young team are staying on the cutting edge. Starting in January, Mexel is launching the first Internet-based network tournament system for arcade videogames. In February, its networked tournaments will expand to embrace many franchised "Moy" arcades in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, India, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. By the end of March, Moy arcades in India will also be wired into the network. Eventually, Mexel plans to have all of its Moy arcades linked. Considering its expanding FEC franchise plans, that could encompass up to 500 arcades worldwide by the end of 1997.

The Mexel network, called Moy Net, can support unlimited game hookups. The first tournament includes simulators and upright games like *Alpine Racer*, *Cyber Cycles*, *War Gods*, *Tekken 2* (and even pinball games like *Arabian Nights*). As currently set up, Moy Net resembles the high-score contests run by Incredible Technologies on its *Golden Tee Golf* game. Remote players will not compete head-to-head in remote interactive gameplay. Instead, they will compete against the machine to achieve their best score, posted at Moy's central computer headquarters and compared to other scores to determine winners. Additional contests, promotions, and more elaborate tournament capabilities will be added in future times. By logging onto Mexel's Moy page on the Internet at http://moy.com.mx, players around the world can also keep track of Moy tournament activities from home.

And in the **U.S.A.**...

Meanwhile, networked video is moving forward in the U.S. as well. Even before the end of 1996, Chicago game factory Incredible Technologies had 1,250 modem-linked units of *Golden Tee 3D Golf* in arcades and sports bars in about 32 states. By now the numbers should be approaching 1,500 and arcades in states like California are getting online. This setup, as you may recall, enables players to spend $5 to compete against the machine for the highest score, with top scores (in each location and system-wide) winning prizes, sometimes in the $1,000 range. In 1996, I.T gave away $100,00 in cash prizes to tournament winners. Fore!

FORMULA 1

All Adrenaline, No Exhaust



Experience the thrill of high-speed auto racing on your PC with **Formula 1 by Psygnosis™**— a graphics experience so real — each white-knuckle, hair-pin curve will drive you out of your seat.

Better buckle up.

Officially licensed by the Formula 1 Association, every car, track, and detail is enhanced by Voodoo Graphics™ — the most powerful 3D graphics accelerator available — making Formula 1 the most hair-raising thrill-ride you can get outside of a racetrack.

3D Acceleration Required*

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Memory: 16Mb RAM
3D Accelerator: Monster 3D, Righteous 3D, PowerPlayer (2010), Pavilion (7295V)
Sound card: Sound Blaster or 100% compatible
Graphics: SVGA video card

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* Voodoo Graphics-based product is required.

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movers & shakers

The business news that affects the games you play

by Christian Svensson

Christian Svensson is the assistant editor and webmaster at Next Generation Online which can be found at http://www.next-generation.com/



INDUSTRY BOOMTIME

NEWSLINE: Industry analyst TRST has released figures detailing videogaming's biggest boom since 1993. According to the market statistics firm, sales of videogame hardware and software have increased by an impressive 31% in October over the same month in 1995. That followed a similar jump of 38% in September. For the whole of 1996, TRST is conservatively predicting an increase of 16.5% or more over 1995.

BOTTOMLINE: This long-awaited growth phase is following two years of decline as the 16-bit era came to an end. Total industry revenues declined 17 percent in 1994 and another 19 percent in 1995. The TRST news, though not unexpected, should put an end to glum talk of industry crash and decay which popped up constantly during the slump.

LIEBERMAN BACK IN ACTION

NEWSLINE: Senator Joseph Lieberman unveiled a blacklist of games that he believes are popular with children and are still too violent. Press coverage was given to his claims, and parents were warned again to take note of industry ratings.

BOTTOMLINE: Many in the industry have a dislike for government snooping, but there have been no attempts to take away the right of self-regulation. Anything which brings the rating issue further into the popular consciousness can't be a bad thing. One unfortunate development in all this hoopla was a certain company (the shameless shall remain nameless) chasing notoriety by demanding that its violent game be included in the blacklist.

SQUARE AND SONY TIE THE KNOT

NEWSLINE: Sony has signed a watertight deal with Square which absolutely guarantees that *Final Fantasy VII* will never appear on the Nintendo 64 in America. Sony will publish the game for PlayStation as well as a number of other PlayStation titles.

BOTTOMLINE: This almost feels like Sony attempting to reassure itself of its relationship with Square, since its always been understood that *Final Fantasy VII* would be a PlayStation exclusive. The good news for N64 owners is that the deal does not close the door on Square returning to Nintendo 64 (or, more likely the 64DD) with more *Final Fantasy* or other Square games.

SONY'S WHITE PLAYSTATION

NEWSLINE: Sony is preparing the launch of a white PlayStation early next year. The secret machine will be launched in February in the Asian Tiger nations including Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore. The white machine will differ from the normal grey PlayStation in color and some extra internal specifications.

BOTTOMLINE: Although entirely PlayStation compatible, it comes with an ability to play MPEG CDs. The market for MPEG movies is so massive in some Asian countries that Sony feels it would have been doing itself an injustice by ignoring this crucial sector. MPEG discs can contain feature films, anime and, as often as not — pornography.

A NEW FORCE?

NEWSLINE: Paradigm has announced the formation of a new division dedicated completely to videogames. The high-end interactive simulation company has already been working in the home market for some time due to its relationship with Nintendo. It was responsible for the highly regarded *PilotWings 64*.

BOTTOMLINE: Paradigm is best known for its simulation work with the military. But its experience in the videogame industry has evidently been to its liking (and to ours). Unlike many other outsiders who try to break in — notably from the media sector — Paradigm may be equipped with the necessary skills to become successful.

INTERPLAY'S CRANE TRICK

NEWSLINE: Interplay has found a novel way to distribute its PC games — via those arcade crane machines where you try to pick out a prize. The company has just announced a deal with CompuPrizes of San Diego which will enable Interplay's PC games to be thrown into arcade crane machines.

BOTTOMLINE: New levels of desperation or bold innovation. Take your, ahem, pick. ng



FIRE FIGHT

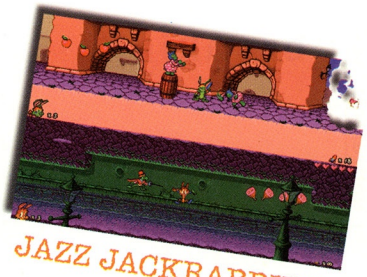
→Available Now!←

➤18 levels of missile-filled mayhem ➤Hi-res multi-level parallax graphics ➤Forest, arctic and jungle planets ➤4-player network/2-player modem support



UNREAL

➤Fast 640x480 action in 16-bit color ➤Stunningly lifelike true 3-D world ➤Designed for play on the Internet ➤Create your own worlds with UnrealEd



JAZZ JACKRABBIT 2

➤Sequel to one of the best PC arcade games ever made ➤2-player split-screen play ➤Multi-player network/modem play ➤Design your own levels with the Jazz Editor



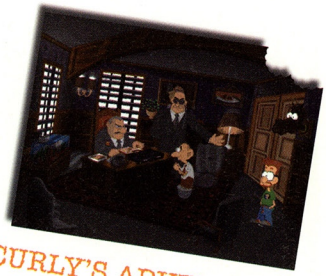
AGE OF WONDERS

➤Captivating strategy and adventure ➤Beautiful hand-drawn graphics ➤Hundreds of unique animated characters ➤Multi-player internet play



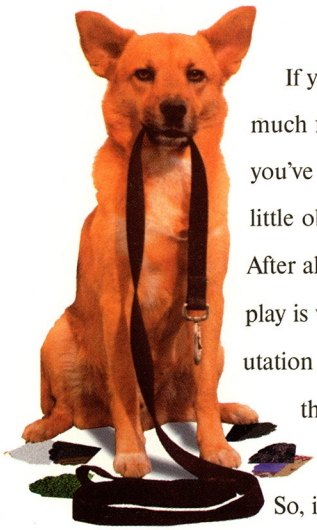
7TH LEGION

➤Fast paced real-time action/strategy ➤Stunning SVGA graphics and rendered cinematics ➤Tons of weapons and power-ups ➤Multi-player modem, LAN and Internet play



CURLY'S ADVENTURE

➤Wacky point & click graphic adventure ➤Hilarious spoken dialogue and cinematics ➤Over 70 locations to explore ➤Hand-drawn 640x480 SVGA graphics



If you find yourself having so much fun playing our games that you've begun to neglect a few of life's little obligations, we understand. After all, totally absorbing gameplay is what we built our reputation on. But bear in mind, there are those who may not be so understanding.

So, if your dog suddenly makes your keyboard his favorite chew toy or your girlfriend decides your computer looks even better at the bottom of your pool than it did on your desk, don't say we didn't warn you.

In fact, you're likely to be so captivated by the gameplay and remarkable technology of our current and upcoming only-for-Pentium®, only-for-Windows 95™ releases, you may need to hire a bodyguard for your computer.

EPIC MEGAGAMES

For more info, check out our Web site at www.epicgames.com.

GADGET

Peripherals, accessories, gizmos, add-ons, thingies, and stuff

Force FX
Price: $249.95
Manufacturer: CH Products
System: PC

This is the coolest thing we've gotten in a year. If you've been living under a rock and aren't familiar with the term "force feedback," here's the scoop: imagine a controller that doesn't just sit there passively letting you push it this way and that, but gives tactile feedback to you, resisting against making a tight turn in a racing game, for example, or jerking around when your F-22 gets slammed by a sidewinder in a flight sim. Currently, only a few games take advantage of the technology, and then only by using a downloaded patch, but the initial line-up for Force FX includes *Need for Speed SE*, *Descent II*, and *Jetfighter III*. However, the idea has so jazzed most developers in the industry, we can expect many, many more titles to support force feedback in the near future.



The technology makes such a difference, that even the test demo that comes in the box — which involves nothing more visually exciting than a straight line, representing a rubber band, and a round circle that stands for a ball - is mesmerizing. All you do is bounce the "ball" on the "rubber band," but the feel of the bounce is communicated through the joystick. The experience is so unique that you could spend hours doing nothing but bouncing the ball — it sounds stupid, but it's true.

Otherwise, the FX Force is based around CH Products's F-16 series, with two 4-way switches, five buttons, and the all-important trigger. The base is much wider than usual, housing the magnets that make the feedback work. Setup requires plugging into both joystick and serial ports, and connecting a separate power supply (hey, nobody ever said new technology was simple). While the $250 price tag may sound steep — well, OK, it is steep, but if you can afford one, we highly recommend shelling out for it. Do it now.

Per4mer Turbo Wheel
Price: $54.95
Manufacturer: Platinum Sound
System: Multi



Not as exciting, the Per4mer wheel can function as either an analog or digital controller and comes in separate models for every next-gen system, including PC, PlayStation, and Saturn. The wheel functions well enough, although the four suction cup feet supplied are barely adequate for the task of holding the wheel down, especially during the overly enthusiastic maneuvers you're likely to perform in the heat of a race. For that sort of thing, you really need a set of clamps, like the one provided with Thrustmaster's steering wheel, but then, the Thrustmaster model is also appreciably more expensive, so take your pick.

Datebook

February

The **Web Design and Development '97** show takes place February 22 to 26 at the Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco, Calif. Surf to www.web97.com for more information.

April

Computer Game Developer's Conference (CGDC) from April 25 to 29 will be at the Santa Clara Convention Center, Silicon Valley, CA. The expo is from April 27 to 29. The show is for programmers, writers, producers, product managers, artists, musicians, and assorted supergeeks. Send your vitals (name, title, company name, address, and so on) to cgdc@mfi.com. To exhibit, call Gina Bovero at (415) 356-3406 or e-mail gbovero@mfi.com. Visit the web site at http://www. cgdc.com. To join the Computer Game Developer's Association, call (415) 948-CGDC or fax (415) 948-2744.

Seybold Seminars comes to New York. The Conference will be April 21 to 25; Expo will be April 23 to 25. Seybold New York will take place in the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in Manhattan. For more info, visit Seybold's web site at http://www.seyboldseminars.com/

May

Multimedia 97 Exposition and Forum will take place May 6 to 9 at the Metropolitan Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, Canada. The show features five major components: Multimedia Communications, Virtual Reality World, VICOM, Showcase On Production, and Electronic Design. For more information, call (905) 660-2491, fax (905) 660-2492, or e-mail moreinfo@multimedia.ca. Visit the official WWW-site at http://multimedia.magic.ca to get show details.

June

The one and only **Electronic Entertainment Exposition** (aka **E3**) doesn't take place in Los Angeles but in Atlanta on June 19 through June 21, 1997. Visit http://www.mha.com/e3/ for more information on E3.

The Spring **CES** (Consumer Electronics Show) will be held June 2 to 5 in Atlanta, Georgia.

The **Spring Comdex** will be held June 2 to 5 in Atlanta, Georgia. It promises to be a busy week in Atlanta. Bill Gates is one of the keynote speakers at this Comdex, so you better sign up early. Check out the details at http://www.comdex.com

July

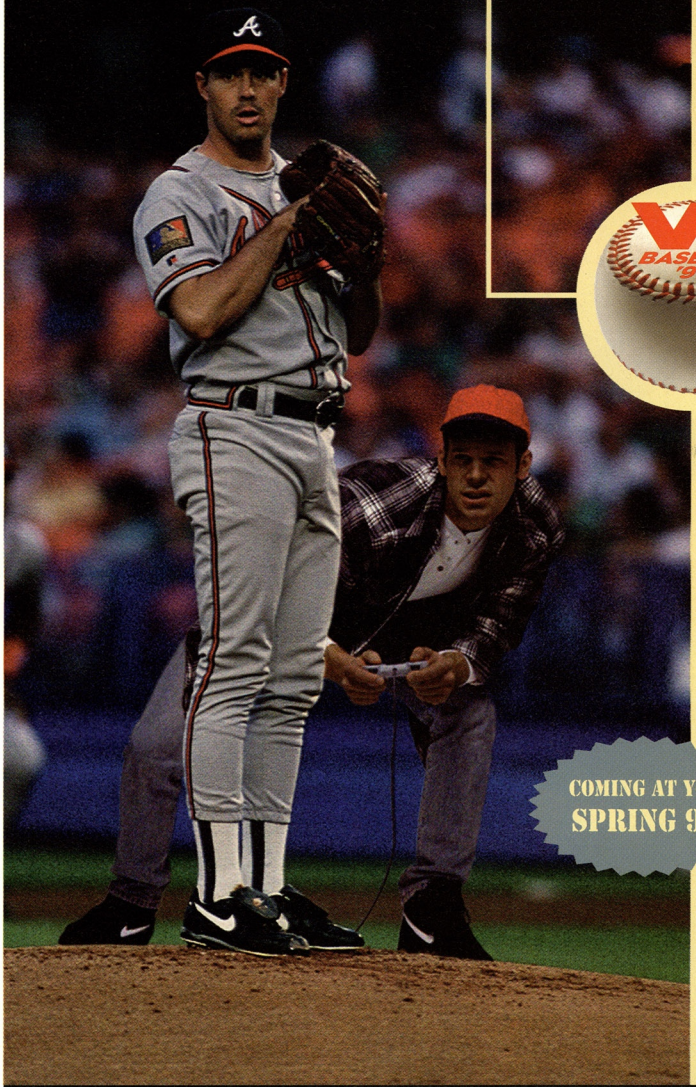
The **Comdex Internet Show** will be at Moscone in San Francisco from July 21 through July 25.

September

Seybold San Francisco: Seybold's Conference is from Sept 29 to October 3. Seybold Exposition will take place from October 1 to 3. For more info, visit Seybold at http://www.seyboldseminars.com/

VR BASEBALL TIP 3

AVOID NICKNAMES LIKE "MEAT" AND "BUS BOY" BY TAKING A FEW PRACTICE TOSSES IN THE BULLPEN BEFORE THE GAME.

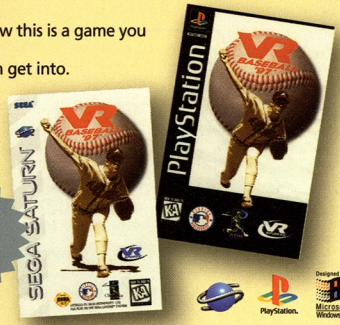


INTRODUCING VR BASEBALL™ '97

It's just a game like the Green Monster is just an outfield fence. Because VR Baseball™ '97 is a real-time 360° 3-D Major League Baseball® world that only the pros have experienced. Until now. Feel the adrenaline as you face Greg Maddux's heat. Make split second decisions as you tag up, steal, execute a squeeze play, or stretch out a double. But you better know your stuff. Because here the players run, hit, slide and throw based on their actual MLB™ stats. There's even an endurance meter which gauges when players get tired. (Better make sure there's a reliever in the bullpen.) From the first pitch to the last out, it's baseball at it's best. VR Baseball™ '97. Now this is a game you can get into.



You may want to dust off after a slide. Virtual FieldVision lets you play in real-time from any camera perspective.



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VR SPORTS™

THE DIFFERENCE IS REAL.™

KIDS TO ADULTS

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Updated rosters, stats, uniform designs and team logos for 1997.

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Top 10 Online Gaming Sites: A Next Generation Report

Online, multiplayer gaming is not "the next big thing" — it's "the big thing" right now. As such, scores of companies are getting involved. What's worth your money — or time? **Next Generation** surveyed the current crop of online, multiplayer spots on the Internet to bring you this report



Playing games against computer artificial intelligence is fun. But few will deny that it is not nearly as fun as playing a computer game against another human. Take *Quake*, for example. *Quake* is fun. A *Quake* deathmatch against seven of your closest friends is awesome. Nothing provides a feeling of victory like actually beating a real human does.

Playing multiplayer games that went beyond two- or four-player arcade or console titles was once restricted to an elect group: those with access to LANs, those willing to look past graphics issues to play text-based MUDs, and those willing to pony up the high cost of entry to play games on online services like CompuServe and GEnie.

With the advent of, general acceptance of, and cheap access to the Internet (not to mention Windows 95 and Winsock, which enables designers to easily include Internet play), all that is changing. Where games used to be designed strictly for LAN play, more and more titles are being released that use the IPX protocol and take advantage of the TCP/IP network protocol — enabling direct play over the Internet.

What's more, LAN play used to be a last-minute addition, generally done so designers could play among themselves. One major publisher told **Next Generation** as recently as 18 months ago that they estimated less than 1% of the people who bought a specific game actually used the networking feature. Now, it is an essential part of any title in any genre, with the possible exception

ng special

of adventure games.

So everything's wonderful, right? Thanks to cheap Internet access and (dare we admit it) Windows 95, multiplayer has come to the masses, and people whose only experience with *Doom* was the single-player mode can now kill new friends around the world. Well, sort of.

Although some major technological hurdles have been crossed, the big one, latency, is still quite prevalent. Latency is the time it takes for a signal to leave your computer, travel over the network to the server or opponent's computer, and back again. If the latency is too high, gameplay can be terminally affected. The classic example of high latency is a fighting game where it takes a half second after you do a move on the joystick for your character onscreen to move. Not much fun, eh?

As the popularity of online, multiplayer gaming has grown, a number of commercial ventures have sprung up to facilitate gaming online. Because most of the functions of the commercial sites can be done now, for free, using various applications, the commercial sites have sought to add value to services using a number of methods, including implementing low-latency solutions, offering easy online set-up options from within games (thanks to exclusive deals with publishers and developers), and offering a sense of "community," with user-profiles, high-score contests, web areas devoted to specific games, and the like.

In addition to the commercial services, many developers and publishers are starting up their own game matching services to support their own titles. In fact, nearly as many online gaming solutions exist as there are online games. The average gamers won't know what will work best for them, without wasting lots of time (and, potentially, money) trying everything.

Next Generation has surveyed the bulk of the online gaming solutions available today, and is pleased to bring you this report on the top places to play games online today. We surveyed everything, from the free solutions to the commercial services, to the dedicated, online-only games. Following is our report on the top 10 places to check out when you want to play multiplayer games online, listed in the order we recommend trying them. Also, you'll find a sidebar on some upcoming services to watch for, and our personal top 10 of online, multiplayer games.

1 Kali

This is the Internet-born online gaming service. Jay Cotton, Kali's creator, says that he would "love to make sure that gaming stays free — or almost free" on the Internet, and you can almost see him smile when you hear him talk about Kali and the impact it already has had on the major commercial services, TEN and Mpath. Quite simply, Kali, and specifically Kali 95, enable you to play games designed for Novell IPX LANs over the Internet. Since nearly every multiplayer game supports IPX, nearly every multiplayer game supports free Internet play via Kali, which itself is available for a modest $20 shareware fee.



When the money people behind TEN and MPath have nightmares, they often feature Kali

As the popularity of online, multiplayer gaming has grown, a number of commercial ventures have sprung up to facilitate gaming online

Kali started out as iFrag to enable *Doom* deathmatches over the Internet. Cotton put the code together himself, and a small circle of gaming users made Jay tweak it into something called Kali. Kali translates the IPX network protocol used by games into the lingua franca of the Internet, TCP/IP — it makes your Internet connection appear as an IPX connection to your LAN game. Fine if you could get TCP/IP running on your machine under DOS, but that required more patience than even most hardcore gamers had to spare. So Kali was initially a solution only for those who liked playing with PCs as much as playing games on PCs. But Cotton then released Kali 95, which takes advantage of Windows 95's much-improved network support, and a star was born.

There are more than 50,000 Kali users worldwide, and a slew of people who have paid $100 to run the Kali server software to host the Kali sessions. Users pay $20 for unlimited use of the client software. You can download a limited shareware version from http://www.axxis.com/kali; send in your money and get an authorization code. It's a little more of a do-it-yourself environment than TEN and the commercial services, but it's a great alternative — especially if you don't want to shell out the money for subscription fees. Cotton has added Mac and OS/2 support, and the list of IPX games supported — *Apache*, *Big Red Racing*, *Command & Conquer*, *Mission Force: Cyberstorm*, *Deadlock*, *Descent/Descent 2*, *Doom/Doom II*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, *EF2000*, *Fire Fight*, *Hellbender*, *Heretic*, *Hexen*, *Links LS*, *Mechwarrior 2*, *Monster Truck Madness*, *Mortal Kombat 3*, *Nascar Racing*, *Network Fighter Duel (NetDuel)*, *Quake*, *Rise of the Triad*, *Shattered Steel*, *Super Karts*, *Terminal Velocity*, *Top Gun*, *VR Pool*, and (finally) *Warcraft/Warcraft 2* — can't be beat.

Kali St. Louis is the beehive of Kali gaming today, especially for *Descent* gamers; GC NetMech is the place to play *MechWarrior*, while the *Links LS* server is dedicated to the well-received golf game. A *C&C: Red Alert* server has sprung up, while old favorites Kali Central and CastleNet are still worth checking out.

Cost: $20, $100 for server software

#2 Mplayer

Mpath's Mplayer is the online game service of the moment, and believe us, that list changes with alarming frequency. Using two different ISPs, a local ISP and



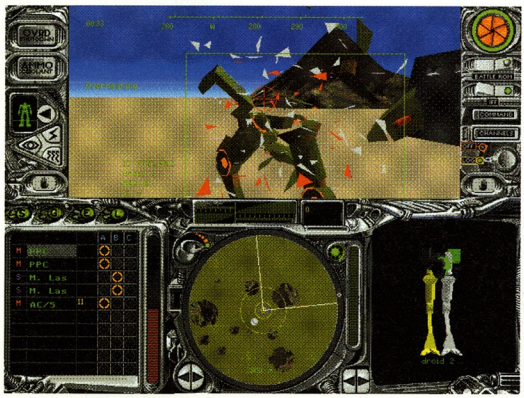
Thanks to voice support, you can chat on MPlayer without a keyboard

The Traditional Online Services

AOL, CompuServe, and Prodigy don't want to be left behind; here are their offerings to the world of online, multiplayer gaming

These online services aren't great places to play the low-latency stuff, but there's a host of online-only games these services have inherited from GEnie's demise. There's a slew of low-impact games, like card games and chess. That being said, CompuServe provides the best hardcore gamer support and has a Modem Games forum where ladder tournaments are regularly held.

Kesmai rules the online action world with an all-star lineup of games, starting with *Air Warrior*. The boxed version will be available through Interactive Magic, and you can fly the World War II fighters and bombers on several different services, including Prodigy, AOL, and CompuServe. But that's not all — Kesmai's SVGA *BattleTech* is an underrated version of the battling 'Mech game – it takes place earlier in the *BattleTech* universe, so forget about tracking missiles, ARROW IV, or Beagle Active Probe, not to mention ER PPCs and Pulse Lasers. But the game, even with the lesser production values compared to *MechWarrior 2*, has its own merits. Hit a 'Mech and it reels back; it can fall and right itself. Kesmai is also working on an online version of the so-so *Star Rangers* (it'll be fun online), and the grognard-only *Harpoon* naval wargame.







Kesmai's SVGA *Battletech* may not have the looks to compete with *MechWarrior* and other 'Mech megahits, but the gameplay's there. And SVGA *Battletech* is only online

Simutronics is the other power, for now, in the online-only gamespace. *Gemstone III* attracts legions of dedicated gamers, even though it's a text-only FRPG. A game of tremendous depth, Gemstone feels like its been around and has tradition — no surprise since it's been built on and grown over the last decade. Simutronics also offers a first-person fantasy shooter, *Archmage*, and the action-oriented *Cyberstrike* — a very primitive battling robot game — along with a text mystery adventure, *Modus Operandi*.

Meridian 59 is now on AOL. Now, you'll notice that this 3DO game didn't make the best online games list. The problem is that while the 3D, first-person FRPG is ambitious, it looks dated — kind of like *Legends of Valour*. In a time when first person games are measured against *Quake*, *Duke*, and *Terra Nova*, *Meridian 59*'s production values don't quite make the A list. And the first-person perspective is problematic in a social environment — an overhead view gives you a better sense of surroundings. Sure, the 3D chat environment and role-playing game attracted 25,000 users in the open beta — then again, look how many people get in line for free paperclips at E3. It's worth a look if you're into FRPGs. But 3DO has some work cut out for it if it wants *Meridan 59* to withstand the onslaught of *Ultima Online*.

Cost: too many variations to list here: assume $20/month for unlimited usage

MindSpring (which happens to be Mplayer's ISP of choice because it runs on the PSINet backbone), we've gotten the best results here. Mplayer has partnered with PSINet and guarantees the lowest latencies when using it. The service supports voice chat, but what we feel people will be most interested in is the games. If you want to play *Quake*, this is a very good place to do it. Of course, other games like *Command & Conquer* and *MechWarrior 2* are supported here as well. Mpath merged with Catapault (to get the technology behind XBand), so you might reasonably suspect that console-based games, using Sega Saturn/NetLink, might appear here. It is also worth noting that SegaSoft is a major investor in Mpath.

Connections vary, of course, so if you're using TEN's ISP of choice, Concentric, you might want to check out TEN instead. And the experience here can be frustrating — for instance, any 3D-accelerated version of *MechWarrior 2* won't run on Mplayer. *Quake*, *C&C*, *Terminal Velocity*, and *Warcraft* are all here. And by the way, Mplayer has nabbed the game of the hour: *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*. Of course, by the time you read this TEN should have *Red Alert* too. Supported games coming soon to Mplayer include: *Battleship*, *Big Red Racing*, *Chaos Overlords*, *Deadlock*, *Diablo*, *Monopoly*, *Panzer General*, *Risk*, and *Scrabble*.

Cost: Charter Rates available for all members who signed up before January 31, 1997

Welcome: $7.95 per month (includes 5 hours of Mplayer — each additional hour is $0.99)

Value: $19.95 per month (for unlimited usage)

Super Value: $199.95 prepaid for 12 months (for unlimited usage, non-refundable)

Standard Rates available for members who signed up *after* January 31, 1997

Welcome: $9.95 per month (includes 5 hours of Mplayer — each additional hour is $1.95)

Moderate: $19.95 per month (includes 15 hours of Mplayer — each additional hour is $1.25)

Value: $29.95 per month (for unlimited usage)

Super Value $299.95 prepaid for 12 months (for unlimited usage, non-refundable)

#3 Any Quake Server

Let's face it, *Quake* is arguably the best multiplayer shooter online, and it was one of the first titles to include TCP/IP support. *Doom* was strictly an IPX game, but *Quake* fits onto the Internet perfectly. That means anyone can put up a *Quake* server on the Internet — all you need to do is know your IP address (it looks something like this: 255.255.255.255), and anyone on the Internet can use *Quake*'s Q95.BAT program under Windows 95, run *Quake* and find the *Quake* server on the Net. Of course, that means there's a slew of servers that can pop up and disappear.

Coming soon is Id's *QuakeWorld*, which will run from Id's main server, tracking all the *QuakeWorld* servers on the Internet — that means all *QuakeWorld* gamers and clans will be ranked on a *QuakeWorld* ladder. You'll find your friends across *QW* servers. But until the idiosyncratic and reclusive Carmack releases *QuakeWorld*, you'll want a way to track the many *Quake* servers on the Internet like the *Quake* Stomping Grounds (http://www.stomped.com/servers.html) or Blue's News Active *Quake* Server List (http://www.bluenews.com). By far the best, though, is a simple program called *Quake* Spy (http://www.panix.com/~sheaslip/qspy/). Of course, running "raw" on the Net, there is no guarantee of low latency, but if you stay close to home geographically, have a fairly fast ISP, you should be OK. Otherwise, you may want to check out a commercial service.

Cost: Free

Let's face it, *Quake* is arguably the best multiplayer shooter online, and it was one of the first titles to include TCP/IP support

#4 Battle.net

Blizzard's Battle.net (http://www.battle.net) just went online and it is good. *Diablo* and *StarCraft* will be playable multiplayer here for free — just buy the game. We used a beta *Diablo* to play here, and had a great time. *Diablo*, the eagerly anticipated FRPG game with stunning graphics, has been available for two months now. The incorporation of excellent team strategies and social interaction make *Diablo* on Battle.net an exciting and dynamic experience. *Diablo* will be offered on one of the paying online services as well.



As expected, you can play *Quake* nearly anywhere you can connect with a modem

You can create public or private games — if you want to join a private game, you'll need to type in the session name and the password. All games have a latency bar to tell you your latency before you jump in — since *Diablo* is a real-time game, lower latency is still ideal. Otherwise, you'll experience warps while characters jump around. Not so bad if you are playing cooperatively, but frustrating in player vs. player contests. There is even a "paging" function to communicate with friends online. Players looking for a full RPG experience should go to *Ultima Online* or *Meridian 59* (www.3do.com). Gamers looking for RPG flavor in their action games should sign up right away by buying *Diablo* and logging onto Battle.net. And if *StarCraft* is as good as *WarCraft 2*, Blizzard could find Itself with a very busy site on its hands.

Cost: Free



***Starcraft* will support free multiplayer access through Battle.net**

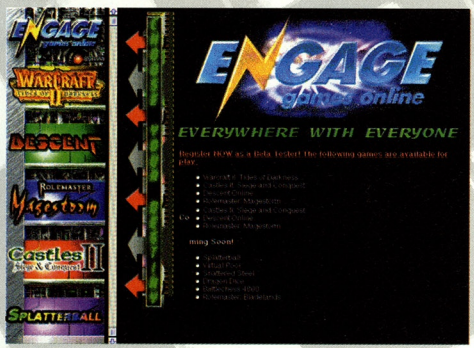
Coming soon

Here are some of the other online, multiplayer gaming options coming in the near future. (Some of them may be online by the time you read this.)

Engage

This is Interplay's online game service (www.gamesonline.com). It'll have a major lineup of games like *Descent*, the AD&D action/RPG *Descent to Undermountain*, *Virtual Pool*, casino games, and other Interplay titles. The question is: what about other titles? INN was too tied to Sierra, and while Sierra has some great content, Interplay doesn't have the titles to compete with the *Dukes*, *Quakes*, *Red Alerts*, and *MechWarrior 2*s of the world. No one company does. The issue is whether other game companies, like LucasArts or Spectrum, can overcome the feeling that Engage is Interplay — a major competitor — to sign up their content on this service. Engage will be available as part of AOL and other services, and it won't have an extra cost above that of using those services (at least, not today; who knows what pricing AOL will implement tomorrow). And *WarCraft II: Tides of Darkness* is here. Engage is in a beta period that's free, but that should end early 1997. Currently, you can play *Castles II: Siege and Conquest*, *Descent Online*, and *Rolemaster: Magestorm*. Titles coming soon include *Splatterball*, *Virtual Pool*, *Shattered Steel*, *Dragon Dice*, *Battlechess 4000*, *Rolemaster: Bladelands*. and of course, *Bomberman PC*.

Cost: included with AOL fee ($20/month)



Engage may have limited content, but it will have *Bomberman* — who really needs anything else?

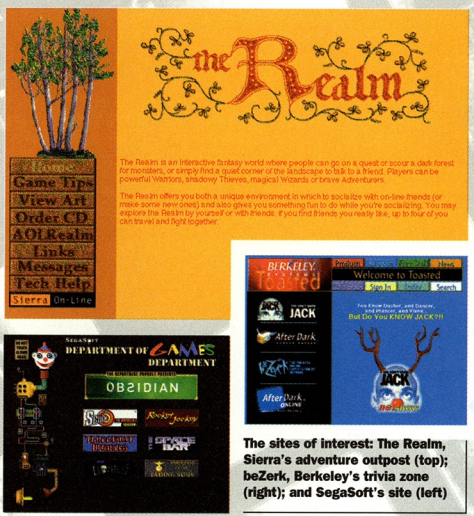
INN

INN, The Imagination Network, was started by Sierra, got off to a promising start with an online *Red Baron*, then spiraled into mediocrity with a tepid FRPG and not much else. Plus it crashed all the time. INN was sold for a bundle to AT&T, which promptly sold it at a loss. Still, INN was ahead of its time, with lite games (chess, blackjack), chat, and hardcore fare in a graphical interface. Too early (and slow) for its time, INN is coming back as CyberPark, now owned by AOL, and will appear on AOL's Games Channel and any other ISP that licenses the environment.

CyberPark is a Windows 95-based 3D environment, but **NG** is skeptical that we are ready for the *Snowcrash*-like avatar world — the first-person perspective is not one for social environments. You don't have the same range of vision through a first-person perspective game, and turning around constantly to find out who's around to talk to can get tedious.

Still, those INN folks have some experience in the business, and some of the initial game offerings are promising: *Red Baron II*, *Front Page Sports: Baseball Pro*, and *Mission Force: Cyberstorm* should be here. But what about the non-Sierra games?

Cost: included with AOL fee ($20/month)



The sites of interest: The Realm, Sierra's adventure outpost (top); beZerk, Berkeley's trivia zone (right); and SegaSoft's site (left)

Other sites of note:

Here are a couple of sites that didn't merit inclusion in the Top 10, but may be worth a look anyway, if you're into the content they provide.

Berkeley Systems (www.berksys.com) has its online entertainment network, beZerk, running its *You Don't Know Jack*, the Net gameshow, broadcast 24 hours a day. This site uses the game's trivia aspect to allow players to win money. Adventure gamers need to check out Sierra's *The Realm* http://www.realmserver.com/, while these two sites, Sega's SegaSoft (http://www.segasoft.com) and Sony's The Station (http://www.sony.com/sca/station.html) both promise gaming content.

#5 Total Entertainment Network (TEN)

TEN had a really good idea — putting a character called Mr. Bandwidth on the site. He tells you about the playing conditions. Unfortunately, in practice, Mr. Bandwidth is incredibly annoying. "Oh, your connection is too latency ridden, you can't play; oh, you're running ISDN, have a good connection and a P166, but you can't play until you end Norton CrashGuard and Microsoft's Quickres applets. OK, now you can play..." Thanks, Mr. Bandwidth. TEN has a big advantage over other services, though, in that you don't have to have an account with an ISP to play — you can log on to Concentric Network and play about a buck an hour surcharge.

If you have the patience to wait, TEN has the most impressive selection of games, including an online-only game, *Darksun Online*, a multiplayer version of SSI's AD&D offering. TEN has exclusive content too, but how exclusive is another question: *Duke Nukem 3D* is exclusive to TEN, but DWANGO and Kali support it, too. *Duke Nukem 3D* has TEN drivers built in, but Kali and DWANGO talk to *Duke*'s IPX network support.

TEN has some other games, too — *Quake*, *Command & Conquer*, *Panzer General*, and *Warcraft* just to name a few, with plans for supporting WWII flight sim *Confirmed Kill*, *Falcon 4.0*, and *Masters of Orion II*, but be aware of the hype: TEN says it will support Papyrus's *NASCAR Racing 2*, but a Papyrus spokesperson swore to **Next Generation** there was "ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY NO WAY" TEN could ever get the consistent low latency required for a racing game (as opposed to a "driving" game like *Monster Truck Madness*). Yet, like magic, it's due on TEN. Marketing hype? Maybe. Probably. But still, even without *NASCAR 2*, TEN has a lot of titles to play. TEN also has the strongest "community" elements of any service, lots of stats, player info, and so on, which the free services don't provide.

Cost:

Charter Member (if you were a member during the open testing period and sign up)

Hourly Rate Plan: $4.95 monthly fee for 5 hours connect time, $0.95 for each hour after, plus an additional $.095 per hour if you connect via a local access number provided by Concentric Network.

Flat Rate Plan: $14.95 monthly fee for unlimited access, $0.95 per hour if you connect via a local access number provided by Concentric Network.

Regular Member:

Hourly Rate Plan: $9.95 monthly fee for 5 hours connect time; $0.95 for each hour after, plus an additional $.095 per hour if you connect via Concentric Network.

Flat Rate Plan: $29.95 for monthly fee for unlimited access, with an additional $0.95 per hour if you connect via Concentric Network.

If you have the patience, TEN has the most impressive selection of games, including an online-only game, *Darksun Online*



TEN's web sites provide plenty of support material for each of its games

#6 MPG Net

Multiplayer Games Network (MPG-Net) is a small gaming network that has moved from a proprietary dial-up to the Web, and its home-grown roots show. MPG-Net provides e-mail, forums, and chat rooms, but you don't come for the conversation — at least, not without your armor. MPGNet's big draw is its overhead view online FRPG, *The Kingdom of Drakkar*, which is huge and very well designed.

MPGNet also has Empire Builder, an online version of the railroad board game. *Operation Market Garden*, an online World War II wargame, *Minion Hunter*, an online fantasy board game, *Backgammon*, *Junta*, a political intrigue board game, *Wari*, an African strategy game, *Tic-Tac-Toe*, and *Imperium*, an online two-player space strategy game, are also available.

MPG Net also has an IPX Simulator, like Kali, to enable network games to be played on MPGNet. Check the site out (http://www.mpgn.com) and download the software. The service lacks the glitz and polish of some of its competitors, but for the price, it is worth trying if the games appeal to you.



MPG has been around forever; MPG-Net features an extremely robust and mature FRPG

Cost:

$19.95 / month for unlimited access

#7 Internet Gaming Zone

Sure, it's was bought by Microsoft. Sure, Microsoft's current crop of games isn't too spectacular (to be very kind). But when the big boy on the block starts paying attention to the online games world, you know things can get interesting awfully quick — just ask Netscape.

The Internet Gaming Zone (http://www.zone.com) started out as a two-man operation, offering board and card games — Bridge (a Bill Gates favorite), Chess, Checkers, Go, Spades — and he must have thought it cute, because he bought the company. You need to download applets to enable some of these games, but it isn't too much of a chore.

Microsoft has used Internet Gaming Zone as the launching pad for their games, using DirectX, and who knows what other



Microsoft's games may not thrill, but they're better with more people

Online Games to watch for:

Check out these other online, multiplayer games coming to a computer near you. (Some of them may be ready to play by the time you read this.)

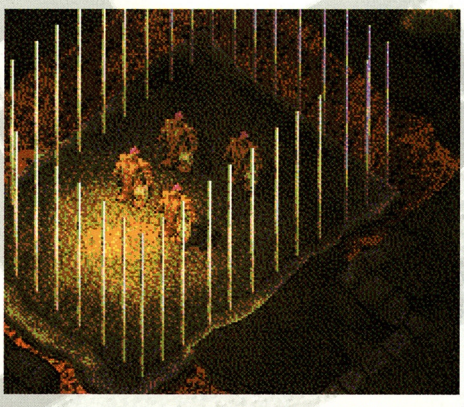
The two most anticipated hot spots of gaming on the Net both come from Electronic Arts subsidiaries. *Ultima Online* is the long-awaited fantasy role-playing universe that uses an overhead engine similar to, but much improved over, the one seen in *Ultima* 7. But this time the world of Britannia is huge, bigger still than all the previous *Ultimas* combined. While you don't play an Avatar, and are not bound by Lord British's code of morality, the game should be familiar territory for any *Ultima* fan. Guilds and other social structures have begun to emerge in the pre-alpha test, and expect more complex societies to form; *Ultima Online* uses a skill system designed so that veterans, while powerful, don't lord over newbies like gods on earth.

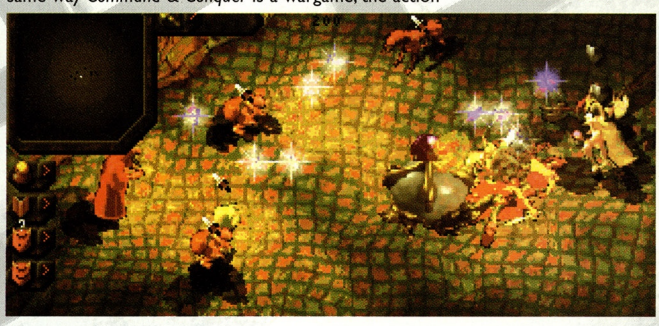
ultima online

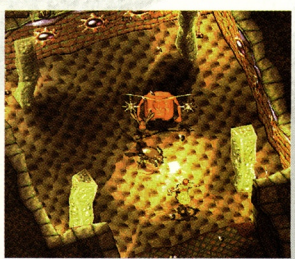


Does this look familiar? Guess what — *Ultima* is going online

Bullfrog's *DungeonKeeper* is scheduled to be in beta in December for an early 1997 release, *DK* is a RPG the same way *Command & Conquer* is a wargame; the action takes place in real time, and as you might expect from Molyneux, the game is full of wry humor and fabulous detail. You play the ruler of a dungeon seeking to expand your evil influence across a happy landscape; lure evildoers into your dungeon and use them against the namby-pamby knights and assorted do-gooders until you attract the attention of the owner of the shining castle atop the hill, Lord British, who sends his ultimate milquetoast, the Avatar, into your Dungeon. If you're good enough, you can kill him seven different ways. The boxed game will precede the Internet version by about a month; the Internet game will support up to 250 simultaneous players. Check http://www.ea.com for announcements as to where to sign up and play.







Want to be bad? Want to get good at being bad? Play *DugeonKeeper*, and you will

game developers (using DirectX too) might show up here? *Close Combat*, Microsoft's best game, can be played here, as well as the lukewarm *Hellbender*. *Monster Truck Madness*, a paean to trashy monster truck rallies, is the closest thing to a racing game on the Internet. Microsoft hasn't even begun to fight, and you can expect more from the Redmond giant. Maybe Microsoft will acquire an online game company. But as long as Gates thinks the Internet and computer gaming are the next big things, it won't be boring in the Pacific Northwest region of cyberspace. This is a site to check out not so much for the content, but to see the potential future of multiplayer gaming, and to check out the results of Microsoft's back-end software.

Cost:

$19.95 / month for unlimited access

Check out Internet Gaming Zone — not for the content, but to see the potential of multiplayer gaming and Microsoft's back-end software

#8 Westwood Chat

Top marks to Westwood Studios for coming up with one of the first, and certainly one of the best, free dedicted on-line game services available. Westwood Chat may not have the bells and whistles of pay services like TEN and Mpath, but it's easier to use and already has a loyal band of gamers logging on around the clock. Westwood Chat is both a real-time chat server and a multiplayer game system that has been primarily launched to cater to players of the company's top-selling *Command & Conquer* prequel *Red Alert*.

There's always at least a dozen games going on, and finding an opponent (either by challenging a player or waiting for a player to challenge you) takes, on average, around 15 to 30 seconds. That's fast, and so is the ping time during the game (almost as fast as a LAN connection) but there's one shortcoming — unlike TEN and Mpath, which support games of up to six players, Westwood Chat currently only enables one-on-one games. As Westwood boosts the power of its service, however, the game parameters are set to expand. Bottom line — it's all free. Westwood Chat software comes bundled with all copies of *Red Alert* and is installed along with the game itself, while new revisions are available from www.westwood.com.

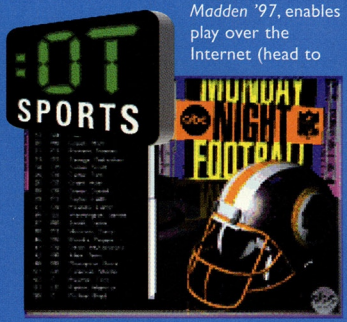
Cost: Free



C&C, and its prequel *Red Alert*, are available for play everywhere, including Westwood

#9 OT Sports

Sports games may be the toughest games to play over the Internet, in action mode anyway; you'd need very low latency to handle the quick movements required by any sports game. Of course, there's always coaching mode, and ABC Interactive's Monday Night Football lets you coach, competitively on the Internet. While AT&T's ill-fated ImagiNation Network had a creaky version of Front Page Sports: Football online, how many hardcore gamers were on INN? No other top-notch football game, not even *Madden '97*, enables play over the Internet (head to head modem has been a standard feature for years, of course). OT Sports website (http://www.otsports.com) is the place to come for instant matchups, in case you're jonesing for more NFL.



Coach *Monday Night Football* online, free, via OT Sports's website

Monday Night Football, in the stores at $29.95, is a bargain compared to the other football titles out, and you can use the game's innovative on-the-fly play calling to design your own offensive and defensive plays. The game's full of audio and video from ABC's Monday Night Football triumvirate, Alfrankendan, and they provide detailed play-by-play commentary. The graphics are top-notch, and if you want to play football over the Net, *MNF* is the only game in town. Like battle.net, this service is free courtesy.

Cost: Free

#10 DWANGO

DWANGO is not on the Internet; instead, you dial into one of the 30 or so servers in major metropolitan markets around the country. The upside? Very, very low latency. The downside? Limited markets, no Internet accessibility, and smaller audience potential. But if you want to dabble and you live near a DWANGO server, check out the site at www.dwango.com. DWANGO was first and foremost a home for *Doom* and its spawn, *Doom II*, *Ultimate Doom*, and *Final Doom*. But you'll also see *Duke Nukem* and *Warcraft 2* here along with *MechWarrior*. Heard that *Duke* is exclusive on TEN? You're right. But DWANGO wrote IPX-type drivers to enable play over its servers. DWANGO claims that they are paying Apogee royalties; Apogee says it hasn't seen a check yet. **NG** smells lawyers.



Hardcore gamers started DWANGO, one of the first game services

Nonetheless, DWANGO is a viable gamespot especially with the new front end under Windows 95. Servers have been set up in Japan, Singapore, and South Korea, with DWANGO's Bob Huntley looking for new markets. But there may not be enough gamers on your server to satisfy your appetite for destruction (along with your schedule), so do try the service out. Another word to the wise: you may need to run DWANGO's DOS client software if you want to run certain games, like *WarCraft 2*. And you can only play against those on your server — the different servers aren't connected yet.

DWANGO is pretty cost-effective compared to the other online game services (about $2/hour when you buy a 10-hour block) and will definitely deliver lower latencies consistently.

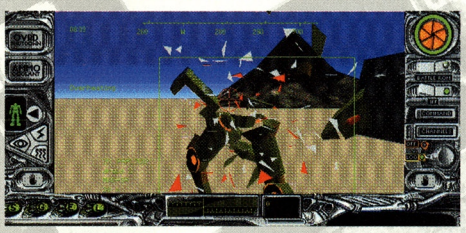
Costs: Subscription costs $7.95/month, includes 5 hours of play time per month, unlimited lobby time; additional time is available: 10 hrs $19.00, 20 hrs $34.00, 40 hrs $59.00.

Next Generation's **Top 10** Online Game Picks

Nearly any game is fun in a multiplayer mode; some, however, rise above. Here are our top 10 picks for online multiplayer gaming

Best Online Games









1. Quake

Duke stole the limelight from *Quake*, but know this: *Quake* is much more gritty and moody than *Doom* or *Duke*, and that may be less appealing to younger, teen-ish gamers. *Duke* has slightly better deathmatch play, but *Quake*'s 3D engine is absolutely fabulous (though not the first true 3D first-person game; honors belong to *Ultima Underworld*, developed by Looking Glass Technologies for Origin). Great frame rates, multiple resolution support, lots of places for a good deathmatch player to strategically kick the crap out of anyone and everyone around. *Quake* has TCP/IP support which means you can put up your own server on the Internet. Try playing it with a Rendition 3D card, the ultimate *Quake* accessory until the D3D version appears.

2. Multiplayer BattleTech: Solaris

Kesmai's newest first-person *BattleTech* game may not have the glitz of *MechWarrior 2*, but it can stand on the same level — it is a more subtle, almost truer-to-life game (if you can say that about a 100 ton battling robot game) than Activision's classic. The battles feel more real, for some reason — maybe because the force of explosions rock 'Mechs. But *BattleTech: Solaris* is only a destruction derby right now, but soon Kesmai will unveil an RPG shell and you'll see what life's like in the 31st Century.

3. Duke Nukem 3D

Duke has so much in the way of multiplayer game features, like the ability to set traps, an interactive environment (translation: you can trash the place), and a (sexist) sense of humor, you'll forget it's a ray-traced, 2D (no, it's not true 3D) game that doesn't look anywhere as stunning as *Quake*. You can't play it over the Internet without going through TEN or DWANGO. Unless, of course, you are running Kali. *Duke* took *Doom*'s deathmatch crown, and hasn't given it up yet.

4. SubSpace

Not just a LAN game brought to the Net, *SubSpace* was designed from the ground up as an *Asteroids* on the Internet. Just go to http://www.vie.com/sniper and download the *SubSpace* file, install, get a screen name and password, then play. It's addictive; fly one of four ships, scouring the battlefield

for powerups and victims. Like *Asteroids*, you have momentum and inertia, which makes maneuvering more difficult and actually eases the latency requirements with predictable movement. You get points based on the bounty assigned to your victims. It's minimal bandwidth requirements mean pretty damn good gameplay, and the software pings the various arenas to see where you'll receive the lowest latency. Nicely done: simple, addictive, and really multiplayer. And the price — free — is right.



5. MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries

Activision's *MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries* is a great game especially after the bug patch, and a BattleTech fan's dream come true with more than 50 Inner Sphere and Clan 'Mechs. It looks better than the original *Mech 2* with more texture maps, a particle system and light sourcing, but this time the game includes MercNet, allowing Internet play through a PPP connection via your ISP. And MercNet play is free!



6. SVGA Air Warrior

Kesmai owns the unfriendly skies with this multiplayer World War II fighter game, though new ace-wannabees are on the horizon: *Confirmed Kill* and *Warbirds*. But Kesmai did what was thought impossible at the time — put out a multiplayer flight sim online with a persistent environment. The latest version sacrifices texture maps for frame rate. You'll thank Kesmai after your first furball.



7. Gemstone III

Simutronics's text-only RPG reminds **NG** of the great Infocom adventures. It has depth, community, and racks up 500,000 hours of use a month. Someone must like this game. And now that it's on major online services, you'll see what the buzz was about when this was the main attraction (along with *Air Warrior*) on GEnie.



8. Command & Conquer: Red Alert

Why *C&C* over *WarCraft 2*? Well, you can play it at more sites, including many commercial sites *and* Kali servers; *WC2* hasn't caught on as quickly. *C&C* is the standard by which all action/strategy games should be measured. Westwood's sequel is even better, as I'm sure *StarCraft* will raise the standard. Competition's grand, isn't it?



9. Diablo

The (always different) shared dungeons of *Diablo* are such a novel innovation that we feel confident predicting that *Diablo*, recently online, which feels like a mini-MUD, will be one of the top selling titles of 1997, and deservedly so.



10. Ultima Online

NG has only played a rough, buggy pre-alpha, but we're already excited. Imagine a world bigger than all the previous *Ultimas* combined where players kill sheep for food, the dragon — whose primary meal has been sheep — gets testy and goes after the human food group, and lo, a quest begins (see interview with Richard Garriot on page 8). We can't wait. Not to mention a chance to whack Lord British and his goody-two shoes morals.

ng


200,000,000 years after the last dinosaur died...

...make dinosaurs



"It's gonna kick some serious butt."
-Next Generation



"The arsenal of shooting devices could supply an armored division!"
-Nintendo Power



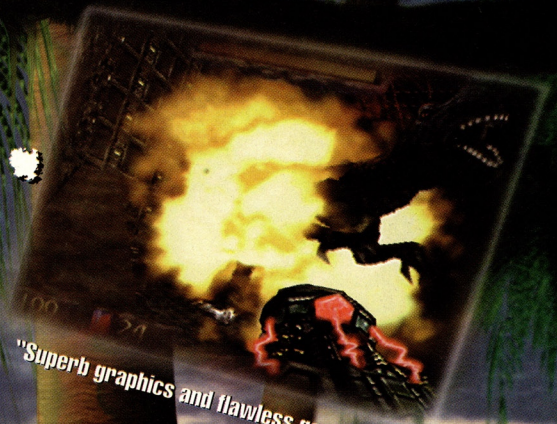
MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

NINTENDO 64

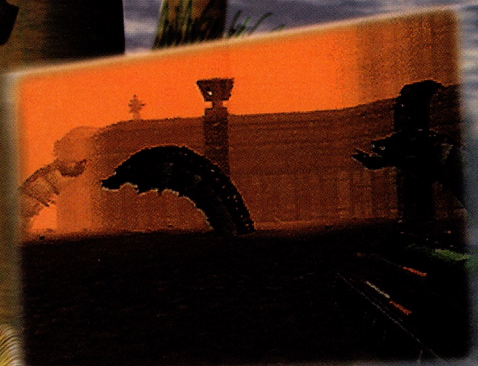
Acclaim
entertainment inc.

www.acclaimnation.com

extinct.
Again.



"Superb graphics and flawless gameplay!"
-GamePro



"The most realistic graphics ever seen on a console game system!"
-Ultra Game Players

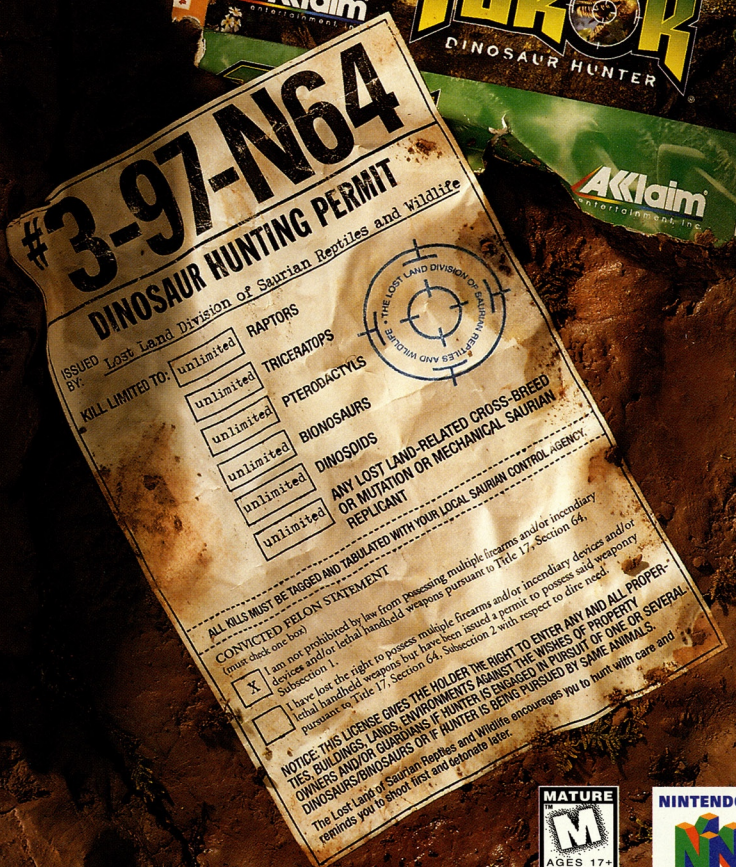


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A world of previews at your fingertips

It's official: the future of gaming really is online. How do we know this? Because the ultimate multiplayer game, *Bomberman*, is being adapted for PC and the Internet, that's why — if that doesn't show which way the wind is blowing, nothing does. While we're at it, take a look at another, newer idea in multiplayer gaming, *Myth*, which offers real-time combat in a 3D world. A couple of "solo" titles, *Flying Saucer*, *Need for Speed 2*, and *The Dark Project* round out the list

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The greatest multiplayer game is coming to the largest multiplayer arena on Earth

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Looking Glass uses stealth and shadowy tricks to outclass *Quake*

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One of the men who helped start 3D gaming with *Ultima Underworld* speaks out

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The Journeyman Project for PlayStation? Wait a minute, this actually looks good...

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Real-time battle strategy gets pulled into the third dimension with this tasty number

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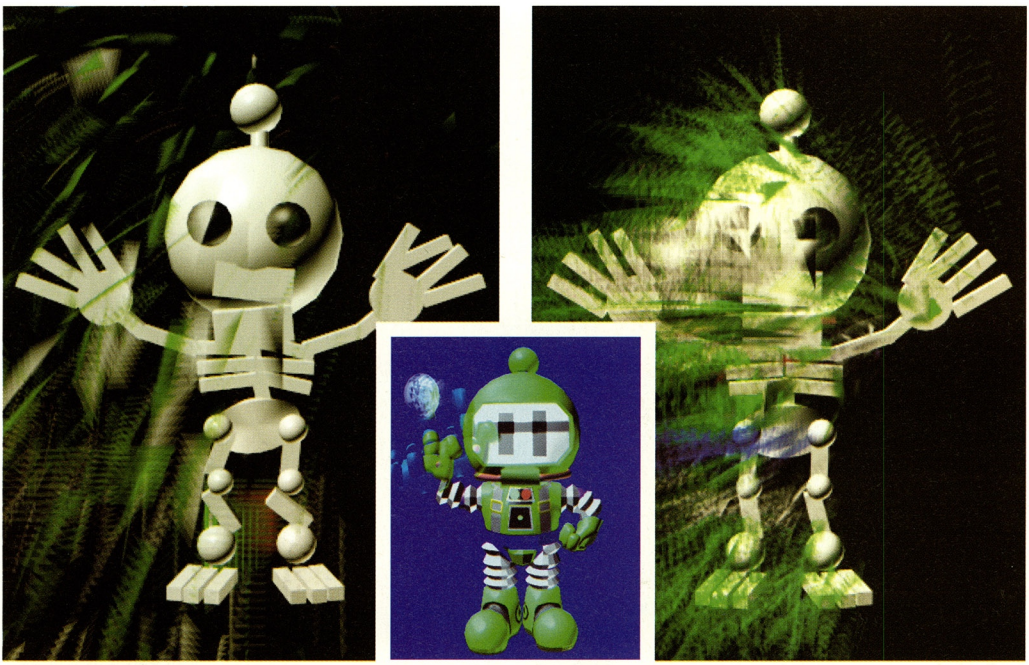


Next Generation OnLine, http://www.next-generation.com/



Bomberman

The ultimate multiplayer game is coming to a LAN or TCP/IP connection near you, sporting a new makeover. If you're not excited, you shouldn't be reading this magazine



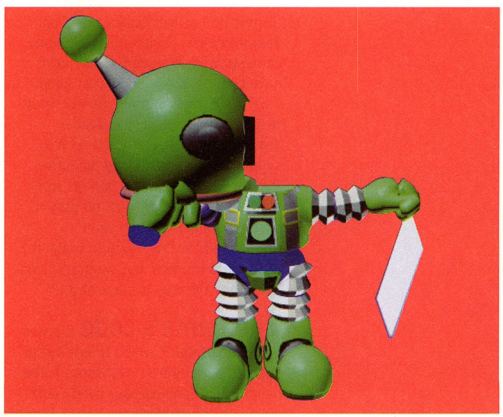
Same guy, new look. *Bomberman* for PC features the same classic gameplay as the SNES and Genesis versions, but substitutes high-tech, rendered characters and backgrounds for an updated look

For over two years, two hours a day, every day, *Bomberman* has kept the Next Generation offices busy. It's that good

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Interplay**
Developer:	**Interplay**
Release Date:	**April 1997**
Origin:	**U.S.**

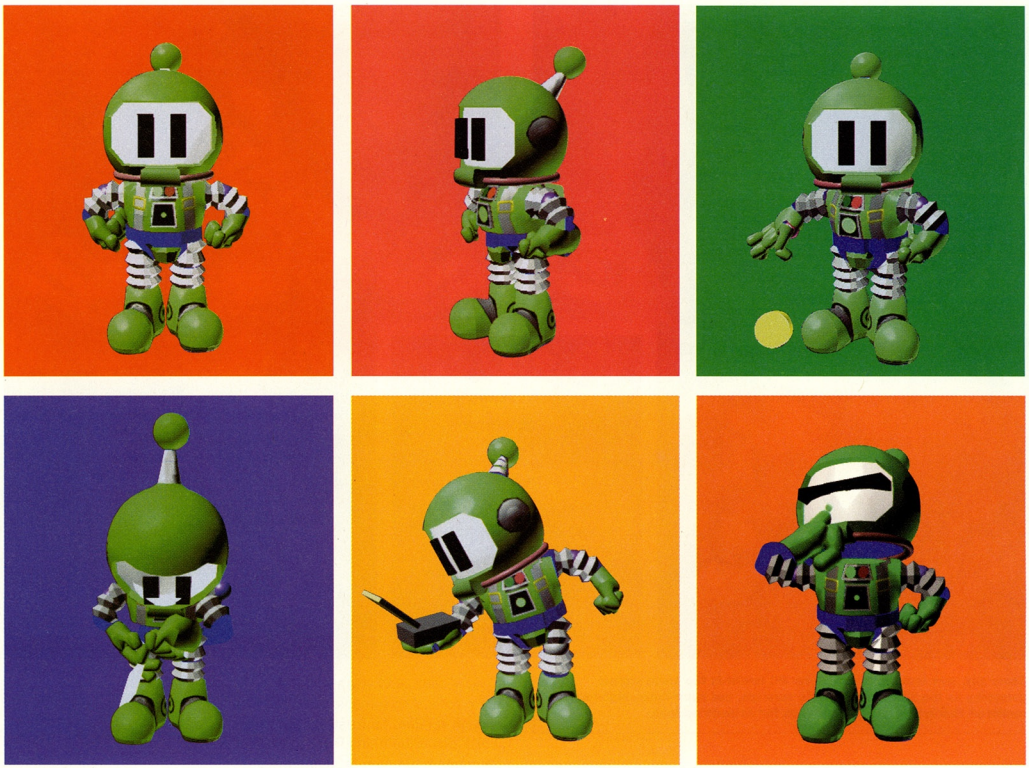
In the annals of video and computer gaming, some groundbreaking, influential, and extremely popular titles suddenly all but disappear until a "new and improved" sequel is released. A rarefied handful, however, keep players coming back, year after year, with little or no variation to the games themselves. *Tetris* fits into the latter category, and so does Hudsonsoft's *Bomberman*.

Jokingly referred to as "the thinking man's chess," *Bomberman* is the ultimate multiplayer videogame: simple enough that anyone can learn the basics in 90 seconds, yet with interaction complex enough that players can spend years perfecting their skills. Add a manic pace and just enough random factors (like who finds which power-up items first) to prevent the game from ever unfolding in exactly the same way twice, and you have a contest that never gets old. For more than two years, two hours a day, nearly every day, promptly at 5:30p.m,



Besides adding a high-tech gloss, rendering the characters also enables the designers to quickly invent and implement a variety of odd actions

ng alphas



Players can expect a wider range of character animations, which the designers have added to give the game more, um, character. Also watch for added player-controllable character actions such as taunts

Bomberman has kept the **Next Generation** offices busy while *Doom* deathmatches, *Command & Conquer* contests, and *Warcraft II* scenarios have come and gone. It's that good.

"It's hard to explain *Bomberman* to anybody," says project leader Jeremy Airey, "because it's such a simple concept, yet it's so addictive. People don't get it, so I always just break down and say, 'Just go play it! Just experience it. Then you'll understand.' We're trying to make it a little more modern, but we don't need to change the way it plays at all."

The game's code is based on *Bomberman 3*, which Interplay has licensed directly from Hudsonsoft. The hand-drawn (and perhaps overly cute), anime-style graphics have been replaced with prerendered sprites, giving this edition of *Bomberman* a glossy, futuristic look, with a slightly harder edge than the bomb-tossing little cyborg had before. The kangaroos and other strange creatures that are bonus items in *Bomberman 3* have been replaced with high-tech looking hovercraft and speed bikes, although their capabilities within the game are precisely the same.

Indeed, the majority of the alterations to Hudson's iteration are, in the end, purely cosmetic. Airey explains, "Our goal isn't to try and make it better — I don't think we could — just to keep it as good as it is. But we do want to make it more visually fulfilling, add a little more variety. When the guys are dying, there are going to be some different deaths in there, so it's not the same every time. We're adding taunts, so if in the middle of killing other players you want to pause for a second and make rude gestures, you can — although not too rude, or Hudson would never approve it."

"It's hard to explain Bomberman to anybody because it's such a simple concept, so I always break down and say, 'Just play it!'"

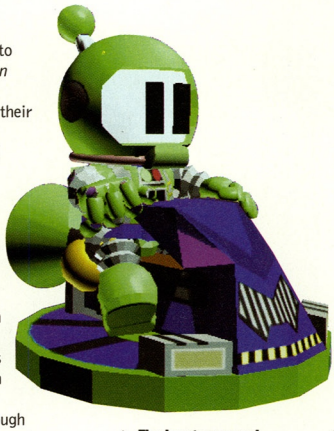
Jeremy Airey, Project Leader

Airey continues, "Something we're also toying with is giving each *Bomberman* a different personality based on color, which would give each different animations — the blue guy would be kind of sad, so he kind of mopes around, the red guy would be real mad, so when he throws a bomb he really hums it hard. Just different stuff so it's not all the same. We want to give it some extra character."

The most exciting new feature is that the game is fully networkable over either Local Area Network, or over the Internet through TCP/IP protocols. The game will also be a featured title on the Engage gaming network. At press time, the total number of participants per match had yet to be finalized. "Initially our idea was to offer twice the number of players that exist in any other version of *Bomberman*," Airy cracks. "Then came Saturn *Bomberman* with ten players, and there was no way we could make it handle twenty!" For now, a more modest goal of five to ten players per game is the target.

Interplay doesn't plan to set up devoted *Bomberman* servers, but players with Internet access can set up their own computers as game servers through their local access providers. The acting server can also enable or disable the game's power-up items and other options, so purists can tailor the game to their own tastes. The software, which runs through Microsoft's DirectPlay API, then polls the IP connections of each player, and lists the expected lag time — although with this simple game, latency is not a big issue. And, of course, players can always find a game on Engage.

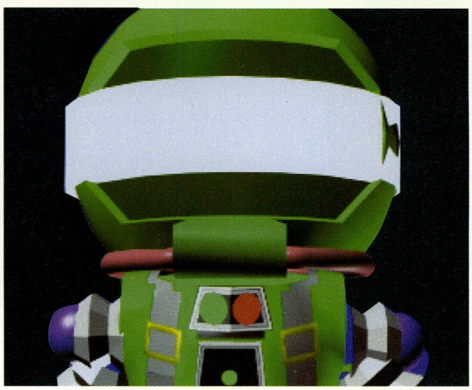
In this growing age of online and networked gaming, it's surprising that no company has offered a PC version of *Bomberman* before. Now that it's finally coming, we at **Next Generation** can hardly wait. In a perfect world, everyone would feel the same. ng



The kangaroos and dinosaurs of *Bomberman 3* have also been upgraded to a more modern (and decidedly Americanized) set of futuristic vehicles







The new Bomberman doesn't just spin and disappear when he meets his demise — all kinds of new ways to die are in the works

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ASCII ENTERTAINMENT

The Dark Project

Looking Glass plunges into the realm of first-person shooters. Can they produce the thinking man's *Quake*?

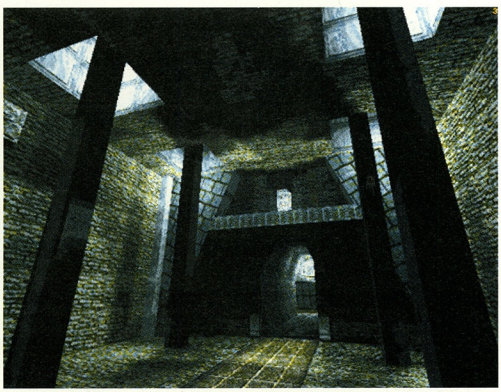


This sketched character will soon become one of the polygonal enemies

It's fitting that Looking Glass, a development house near M.I.T. and Harvard, is dedicated to making games that require some genuine intellect as well as basic twitch skills. So it was somewhat surprising when the Cambridge, Mass.-based group announced work on a first-person shooter — one apparently not too different from no-brainers like *Quake*.

"We've got volumetric rendering, with ray-cast lighting like in *Quake*," says Project Director, Greg LoPiccolo. "Looks-wise we feel it's going to be very competitive." Even more like *Quake*, this new game features polygonal enemies and a medieval setting, but according to LoPiccolo, that's where the comparison ends. "From a gameplay mechanics standpoint," he says, "we're really excited about our concepts for advancing the state-of-the-art, in terms of creating an immersive world where everything works."

As a thief, the player needs to develop more than just a good aim



While this demo level is devoid of enemies, it is nevertheless proof positive that Looking Glass has created an environment as cool as *Quake*'s



Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**TBD**
Developer:	**Looking Glass**
Release Date:	**4th Quarter '97**
Origin:	**U.S.**

According to veteran Producer Warren Spector (see following interview), this title was originally going to be called *Dark Camelot*, set in an alternate Arthurian universe. Not anymore. "We ditched that," LoPiccolo says, "basically it's just called *The Dark Project* for now. In essence you're a thief in this undefined medieval age, sort of medieval meets *Brazil* meets *City of Lost Children*. There's some electricity, some magic, and some 19th century machinery kind of stuff."

As a thief in this world, the player needs to develop more than just a good aim. "It's not like *Duke Nukem*," LoPiccolo explains, "where you have lots and lots of firepower. It's more like you're smart, and you get smarter through the course of the game."

The player is armed with a sword, a knife, and a bow, and, while there are power-ups, players will need to continually improve their tactical skills to deal with situations. "Much



Stealth will be an important survival skill when navigating this world



Most of the roughly 30 enemies are bipeds, but not exactly human

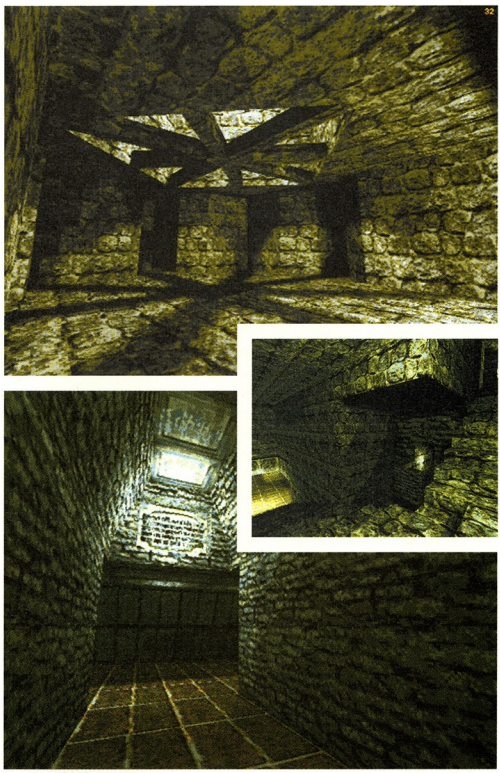
Dark Sounds

Once a member of long-time Boston rockers Tribe, Greg LoPiccolo brings years of audio experience to *The Dark Project*: "We've had a lot of experience and success doing fairly rich audio environments for *Terra Nova* and *System Shock*," he explains. "We have a pretty good skill base now with an editor that enables the actual audio designers to set things and tune them in the editor, so that a lot of the gameplay information will come via audio clues. You'll overhear whispered conversations, and floorboards will creak. If you go up to a door and completely stop, you can hear conversations, so you can make use of moving slowly and being sneaky to gather information that helps from a gameplay perspective."

of the actual gameplay will involve using shadows effectively." LoPiccolo says further. "You're constantly sneaking around and making decisions: who to kill, who to sneak past, and who to trick."

Ideally, the Looking Glass team wants a deep and complex world that is also fast-paced and exciting. "Essentially we're building a type of simulator," says LoPiccolo, "where object interactions are correct and physics are tied in correctly, but not as weak as a *Daggerfall* thing, where there's zillions of NPCs in this large empty world. Also, our combat system enables you to do things other than just blast away at everything in sight." One specific example is when a player draws back on a bow, the targeting camera zooms in. The longer the player draws back, the more accurate the shot. This enables concealed players to snipe enemies with amazing accuracy.

The Dark Project will be the first game to feature "Act-React" technology, an intricate form of engineering that bestows real-world properties to game items. "The goal is for everything to behave as it should," explains Lead Designer Jeff Yaus. "For example, things that should burn will burn, and then it's up to the player to decide to burn things, whether or not we've anticipated it. That's Act-React's real strength. We're using it for



If Looking Glass can properly incorporate its Act-React technology, *Dark*'s gameplay could offer more depth than simply pretty 3D visuals

Act-React technology bestows real-world properties to game items

numerous game properties, including sound in the same sort of way."

Most of the roughly 30 types of enemies will be biped creatures, and LoPiccolo suggests they'll get stronger and smarter as the game progresses. While hesitant to talk about them at this early stage, LoPiccolo explains the motion-capture editing process. "We'll be able to do some very unique organic motion," he says. Lowering his voice, he adds, "Not just straight bipedal stuff, but some scary, creepy stuff with aquatic creatures and some other multipeded enemies."

At this early stage, LoPiccolo guesses a P90 will be the recommended system, and the game will support some 3D accelerator cards, although specific chipsets still have to be chosen. Whether or not the game will support the MMX instruction set is an issue to be resolved in the coming months.





Odd, angular architecture lend to the game's "other-worldly" qualities

While the development focuses on creating a fantastic single-player game, multiplayer modes will be an option, (Looking Glass is currently negotiating with online services). A level editor may also ship with the title; LoPiccolo claims that it's far easier to use than other editors he's seen. He also says the core technology has been designed to be "super-reusable." So it's entirely possible the engine will be licensed out to other developers.

"Like anybody, we have to go with our strengths" LoPiccolo notes. "Clearly if you want a technologically optimized, low-brain shooter, talk to Id. That's what they do, and my guess is they'll do it better than we ever could." He then smiles, and referring to its unnamed, 20- to 25-level game. "But we think we can do expressive worlds better, and we'll still have a fairly high adrenaline factor."



We're not exactly sure what this is, but chances are it won't be friendly

An Interview with Warren Spector

He's a veteran game producer who worked on *Wing Commander, Crusader: No Remorse,* and the two *Underword* editions of *Ultima.* He's currently producing *The Dark Project* and is the reason Looking Glass has a new Austin, Texas office. Warren Spector talks about the game industry, raps about being a game geek, and reveals LG's first Internet project.

NG: You began by developing board games and role-playing pen and paper games at Steve Jackson Games and TSR. What made you jump to computer games?

Warren Spector: I was thinking about our next game, trying decide if I should use a 20-sided die or percentile dice for character creation. I decided if that was the most important decision I had to make, I needed to look for something a little more challenging.

NG: How helpful was this experience when you switched to Associate Producer at Origin?

WS: It took me a day and a half to realize I had a lot to learn. When you're in the pen and paper game business, you're dealing with imagination, and there aren't boundaries. In computer games, you deal with graphics. Believe me, in 1989, the limitations were immense. Working within those limitations and transcending them was the real trick.

NG: You've worked on many hit Origin games. Did you ever know they were going to be hits?

WS: Usually a month or two before we ship, I dream in the perspective of the game. The dreams become horrible nightmares. But when Chris Roberts was working on *Wing Commander,* and I was producing, I knew we were going to change the world. The same with *Underworld I.* Otherwise, I don't know. It's like jumping off a cliff every time.

NG: Do you think it's harder today for game producers to diversify?

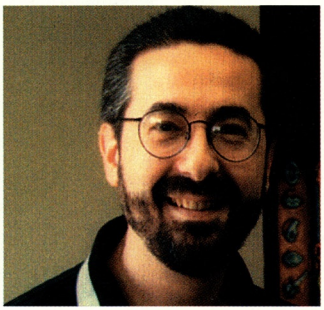
WS: I think most successful producers specialize. But I work a differently from other producers, who work as producer/directors and try to handle all project aspects from day-to-day management to the overall vision stuff. It's more exciting for me to identify people who have a specific vision and then set up a situation in which they can realize it.

I've never started a game I didn't buy into. The day-to-day living with one game for 18 months bores me. I always have my input, but I try to have two, three, four, projects in development at once, working with guys who have the kind of energy, dedication, and focus to live with their game every day.

NG: So what kind of games do you buy into?

WS: I've tried to create games that make you feel you're actually elsewhere. It's almost a game developer's moral obligation.

I have infinite respect for Chris Roberts who wants to make interactive movies, but I can get a better cinematic experience by watching reruns of "Different Strokes" than by playing *Wing Commander IV.*



"Usually a month or two before we ship, I dream in the perspective of the game"

Immersion in another world is, I hope, the unifying thing in the games I've worked on.

NG: The industry has changed since you began eight years ago. Any complaints?

WS: The business has changed radically in the last year, and it's depressing. The competition for shelf space is ridiculous and puts retailers in charge. If you don't buy an end-cap from retailers, for say $50,000 a month, they won't buy many copies. Game distribution isn't always based on quality.

Products once had three to six months. The average life is now 30 days. If you're not a hit in 30 days, you're gone. This is predicated on your association with a publisher who gets your title on shelves. It's a nightmare.

NG: Has this affected your projects?

WS: Publishers look to reduce their risk. I've shut down some good projects. I caved into pressure on a game called *Transland.* It was like *Jumping Flash,* kind of a cartoony, first-person perspective, 3D game. It was cool, but nobody got it. You can download the demo (www.origin.ea.com). It was developed three years ago, and it's still fun, dammit!

NG: Does this ruin the creative side of things?

WS: I'm a game geek — an old fart of 41. I was playing *D&D* when it was in a box with three booklets. I can't imagine doing much else. Many games have a number after their names; that's not creativity, that's minimizing the risk. Origin did not get where it was a year or two ago by not taking risks. You got to know that when Sid Meier said, "I want to do *Civilization.*" People said, "What!?" I pitched a real-time strategy game called *Mobster* to Origin back in 1992. People said, "What!?" Now everybody clamors to do that stuff. I'm not a genius, it's just that if people don't get it, they're not willing to take risk.

NG: How'd *The Dark Project* start?

WS: It started before I came to Looking Glass. I salivated over it, and when the producer left, they gave it to me. I left Origin to make games like this. It may look similar to other games, but we're after a different simulation. Nobody remembers *Underworld* came out before *Castle Wolfenstein 3D.* Perspective should not determine whether you play a game; gameplay is important. *Underworld* is a different animal from *Wolfenstein,* and *Dark* is going to be different from *Quake.* The project I'm doing now will share the technology we're creating for *Dark.*

NG: Can you tell us about it?

WS: It's called "Junction Point," but that's a throwaway name. We're diving into Internet gaming [laughs], but we're taking a unique angle. Not better, not worse — different. We have a creative approach to latency that will amaze people. I absolutely do not believe in software patents, but we've got some patentable stuff. Like *Dark,* it'll be an RPG. I wish I could talk more about it.

NG: Okay...

WS: Let me tell you what we're *not* doing. We're not gonna do a *Quake* with 100 players. Latency will bring those to their knees. And it's not going to be like *Meridian 59* or *Ultima Online,* where you "get together with 2,000 of you're closest friends." I can't put these down, because I'll be playing *Ultima Online.* We're hoping to do our first public test in May. Is that cryptic enough for you?

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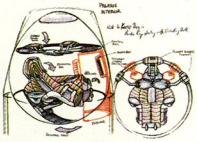
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Pegasus Prime



Presto Studios overhauls everything but the storyline for PlayStation's version of the original *Journeyman Project*

Format:	**PlayStation**
Publisher:	**Acclaim**
Developer:	**Presto Studios**
Release Date:	**March 1997**
Origin:	**U.S.**



Presto's meticulous pre-production lends to the game's well-polished look

According to *Pegasus Prime* Producer/Director Jack Davis, "Presto is known for incredibly elaborate, anal-retentive attention to detail."

And one look around its immaculate San Diego office leads us to believe this reputed behavior extends beyond the game screen. In 1993, Presto released its first game, *The Journeyman Project*, which made history as one of the first CD-based graphic adventures. Now four years later, *Journeyman* reappears as a reworked PlayStation graphic adventure, entitled *Pegasus Prime*.

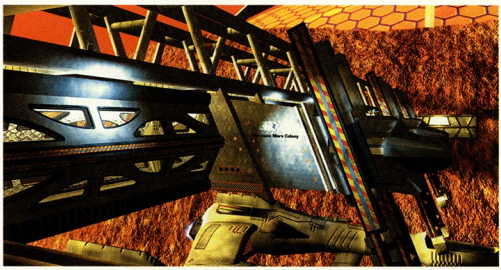
***Journeyman's* photo-realistic visuals and exploratory puzzle elements have won the series a mass following**

"We've recreated the foundation for this world," says Davis about PC's *Journeyman* trilogy (the third of which is in development). In the distant future, the player becomes government "Agent Five," responsible for guarding time travel when history is suddenly corrupted. From a first-person perspective, players must set things right while exploring across time.

Since the game isn't played in real-time 3D, the patience required to navigate *Pegasus* will be beyond many action-oriented PlayStation owners. Yet *Journeyman*'s photo-realistic visuals and exploratory puzzle elements have won the series a mass following. "There's no cutaway shots, no mini-movies," Davis imparts. "It's a complete, full, virtual immersion storyline with constantly changing environments."

According to Michel Kripalani, President of Presto Studios, the game may be the largest PlayStation game ever built. The game will fill three CDs running in single-spin mode. "We believe projects like *D* and *Wing Commander* are running in double-spin mode," Kripalani says. Had *Pegasus* run in double-spin throughput rates, Kripalani says it would have been a six-disc set.

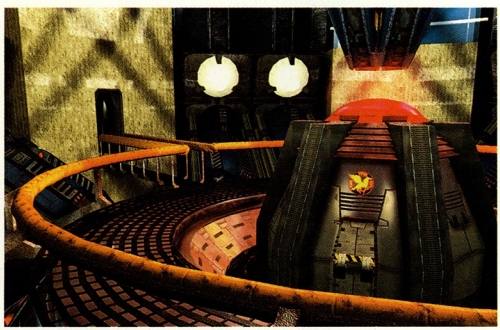
Given PlayStation's rising age demographic, Kripalani believes there's room in the market for *Pegasus*. "I'm not interested in making first-person shooters," Kripalani says. And given that there are plenty of ways to die in *Pegasus Prime*, it should be an adventure to be reckoned with. ng







With custom coded routines, the game's sprite engine runs in 24-bit color



The audio and visuals being developed for *Pegasus* should eclipse those of *Silverload*, one of the few PlayStation adventures



The FMV characters are cleanly silhouetted over the CG backgrounds



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Myth

More than *C&C* or *Warcraft II* in 3D, Bungie's latest real-time game pushes the genre into startling new directions

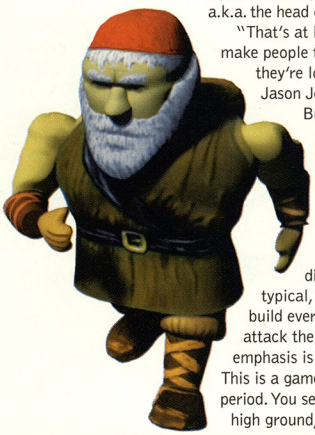
Format:	**PC, Macintosh**
Publisher:	**Bungie**
Developer:	**Bungie**
Release Date:	**Fall 1997**
Origin:	**U.S.**

"We call it a real-time, multimetric tactical game"

Doug Zartman, Head of Marketing

Bungie Software has been known mostly as a developer of Mac games, including the cult hit *Marathon* series. Now Bungie is moving into PC development, and *Myth* could be its breakout title. Whatever it looks like though, don't call it a "real-time strategy game."

"We've been calling it a real-time, multimetric tactical game," asserts Doug Zartman, Bungie's "mouthpiece," a.k.a. the head of marketing.



"That's at least enough words to make people think about what they're looking at," agrees Jason Jones, co-founder of Bungie and its lead programmer and designer. "The problem is that when you say 'real-time strategy,' people think of *Command & Conquer*. *Myth*'s going to be different from the typical, 'Here's your town hall; build everything up around it; attack the enemy in waves.' The emphasis is on tactics and combat. This is a game where you fight, period. You set up troops, take the high ground, meet the enemy halfway with guys to slow him down and hit him from the side. It's all about maneuvers and formations and getting your guys to favorable terrain."



Terrain affects different units in different ways. Zombies can even cross rivers by walking straight in and continuing to troop along the bottom

While the single-player game does follow an extended campaign, each individual level is a single battle. There are no resources, and no building of bases. Players receive an allotment of troops and fight it out with what they have. Reinforcements arrive after, or sometimes during, the battle, and troops who survive gain from the experience and become better warriors.







The game's designers have tried, as much as possible, to stay away from the usual batch of Tolkien-inspired elves and halflings generally found in fantasy-based games. The exception are the Molotov cocktail-tossing dwarves, which co-founder Jason Jones refers to as the game's "comic relief"



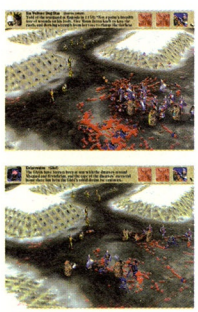
Because of its 3D environment, *Myth* features a player-controllable camera system, similar to that of *Tomb Raider* and other 3D action games (three pictures at top left). When the designers say they want you to see every drop of blood, they really *mean* it (bottom left and right)

This shift in emphasis leads to *Myth*'s other innovation, as Jones explains: "Because we don't care about building buildings, the entire focus of our engine has been on visual realism — seeing every drop of blood that gets spilled on the battlefield." *Myth* is the first real-time combat game played out entirely on a 3D battlefield. Every environment is completely texture- and shadow-mapped and unique in design, with hills, rivers, swamp, trees, and so on. In games like Activision's *Dark Reign*, degrees of elevation are simulated from a top-down view. In *Myth*, the hills really are hills, the valleys are true valleys, and gaining the high ground is an all important strategic factor.

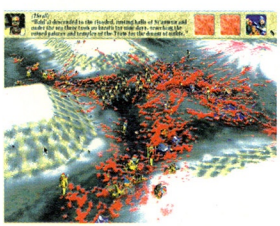
This approach hasn't been without its design pitfalls. "With, say, arrows in a 2D world," Jones explains, "all you have to do is point them in a direction and get them going. Everybody kind of buys that they fly through your own troops because they figure they're going over. But in a 3D world, if a guy drew his bow and shot an arrow straight at you, without accounting for gravity or anything, he'd miss every time. So we have to make the arrows arc in flight — actually, the archers have to solve a fourth-degree polynomial to get a solution that includes leading the target, just to make sure the guy can hit somebody."

Myth's engine is extremely powerful, allowing two or three hundred troops on the field at once. "If it can't," Jones cracks, "we're going to sit there and optimize the damn thing until we can, because that's the whole point." Multiplayer options include LAN and Internet play, with games of King of the Hill, Capture the Flag, and even a kind of rugby played with severed heads.

With its 3D combat, large number of different units, and multiplayer features, *Myth* may very well be the next step forward in "multimetric tactical games." ng



One of the game's more notable units types are zombies filled with putrefying — and highly explosive — gas. Hit them the wrong way, and they can take out a regiment



Anything else we could say about gore would be redundant — just relax and enjoy the serene beauty of a snow-covered landscape dotted with color





Blood

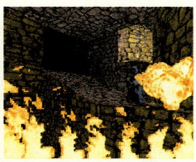
The designers of *Duke Nukem* are back with more humor, more strange weapons, and of course, more blood (duh)

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**3D Realms**
Developer:	**3D Realms**
Release Date:	**June**
Origin:	**U.S.**





The game's selection of weapons runs the gamut from the sublime to the ridiculous: The trusty spray can and lighter combo is clever enough (top left), as is the traditional stick of dynamite (right), but when players pull out a voodoo doll, with the serious expectation it will work on the minions of Hell, well, that's just asking too much...









Possibly best of all, the enemies (read: targets) include mimes

And away we go... 3D Realms is the development house responsible for one of last year's more notable romps, *Duke Nukem 3D*. Now the company is harnessing the same engine for use with a new 3D shooter, which promises to have the same cheeseball humor and buckets 'o gore as its predecessor.

Taking a more horror-based approach, *Blood* pits the player against hordes of zombies, rabid devil cultists, the "bloodhounds of hell," and other infernal creatures, all with the eventual goal of stopping the nefarious Tchernobog. *Blood* upgrades the *Duke* engine slightly, offering faster performance with more detailed textures, but also adds new lighting effects and real-time shadows. More effort has been put into adding movement to the level designs, so whole sections of rooms rotate and slide around. Perhaps the most interesting new addition is the "Rooms Above Rooms" feature, which allows the designers to better implement overhead bridges and increase the amount of activity between floors.

The game's selection of weapons is, to say the least, unique. Players begin with a pitchfork, but may quickly progress to picking up an aerosol can and lighter, flare guns, Tommy guns, and even a voodoo doll. Multiplayer modes include head-to-head Bloodbaths and team-play Bloodfeuds (member of the same team are known as BloodBrothers). There's also a hidden option for playing "zombie head soccer." Oh, and possibly best of all, the enemies (read: targets) include mimes — heh-heh, heh-heh.

After the smashing good time that was *Duke Nukem*, it seems unlikely the same design team would produce a dud. With its clear emphasis on adding even more gore and black humor, *Blood* may not break any technical new ground, but it promises to be a real hoot. ng



And, as the title might suggest, *Blood*'s gore factor will be even higher than *Duke*'s

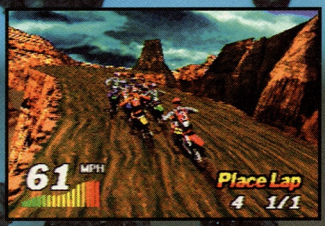
***Blood* sports a greater level of graphic detail than 3D Realms' previous 3D shooter, *Duke Nukem*. It plays faster too**

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Lost World



The first console game from Dreamworks has the best license of the summer, sure, but does it have anything else?





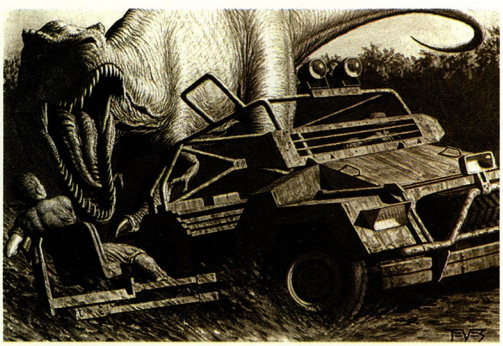


Players "evolve" from the tiny compy to vicious raptors, gaining new abilities and facing new challenges throughout the course of the game. Somewhere in there, they even get to be human

Format:	**PlayStation**
Publisher:	**Dreamworks**
Developer:	**Dreamworks**
Release Date:	**July**
Origin:	**U.S.**

The 3D game's structure is a combination of traditional side-scrolling elements

The Lost World, Michael Crichton's and Steven Spielberg's sequel to *Jurassic Park*, should be in theaters by mid-summer, and, perhaps inevitably, a videogame will be based on the movie. However, in this case, Dreamworks Interactive, the game division of the house that Spielberg, Katzenberg, and Geffen founded, is taking on the creative duties itself.



Conceptual artwork for one of the game's stages — this kind of attention to detail is carried through every phase of the game's production

"When you're talking about making a game based on *The Lost World*, it would seem like an easy thing to do," explains Patrick Gilmore, *The Lost World*'s Director, "you take a guy, put him on an island with a bunch of dinosaurs, and boom, you've got a game. But I think that concept fundamentally ignores one of the primary sources of *Jurassic Park*'s appeal, and that is the dinosaurs themselves. So we thought very early on that no game could be complete that didn't address that, that didn't enable you to be a dinosaur and see what that would be like."

And so, the game begins with the player taking the role of a "compy," one of the smallest dinosaurs that ever lived. From there, the player progresses through the game's stages, taking the form of each successive defeated boss creature — from compy to human, from human to raptor, from raptor to T-Rex, then from the top of the food chain back to being human. This expands and adapts the world of

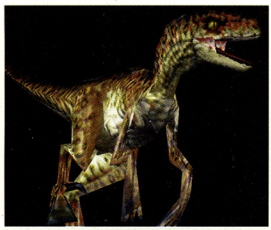


The game's artists are faced with deciding what color dinosaurs were





The game has every creature from the film, and adds a few new ones







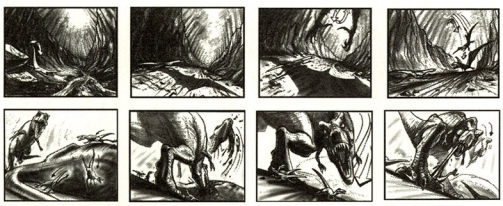
All the game's 3D creatures are smooth, single-mesh MIME models

the film, avoiding a fault which dogs more literal-minded movie tie-ins: following a film so closely, there are few surprises for the player.

The game's structure is a 3D combination of traditional side-scrolling elements, with numerous optional branches along the game's path. "We decided not to go with a true 3D world from the beginning," Gilmore explains. "With this engine we could have supported 3D, but a true 3D game, especially with a PlayStation controller and given the speed and level of action we wanted, just wasn't the answer. Controlling the character would be too complex. Other 3D games, *Mario 64* or *Tomb Raider*, are more about exploration than action, and they have a built-in forgiveness for when a character runs into a wall or something: Mario gets these cartoon stars going around his head, but when you're playing a T-rex, you can't have cartoon stars."

Other considerations went into the game's "3D-but-side-on" view as well. Gilmore continues, "By having specifically delineated paths, we control the camera a lot more and make it more cinematic, without a lot of 'ugly' shots. So when you're fighting other dinosaurs you get a lateral view, instead of having to combat them by judging along a lot of different axes or while spinning the camera around to get a good view. Lastly, the engine supports unlimited path branching, so our philosophy is it's a real 3D world, we just give you a path everywhere you want to go and nowhere you wouldn't want to go."

Given the level of action the



This concept art shows how a lowly compy might try to handle the odd pterosaur attack, or the vagaries of T-rex mood swings







The game's creature animation grows out of the single-mesh approach, morphing smoothly between positions and resulting in dead-on control



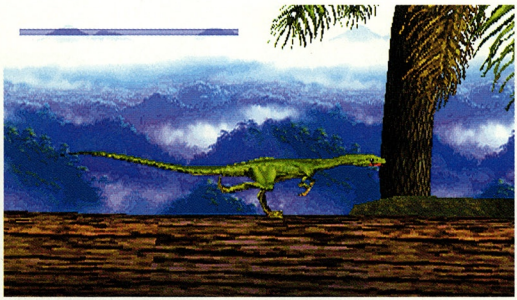
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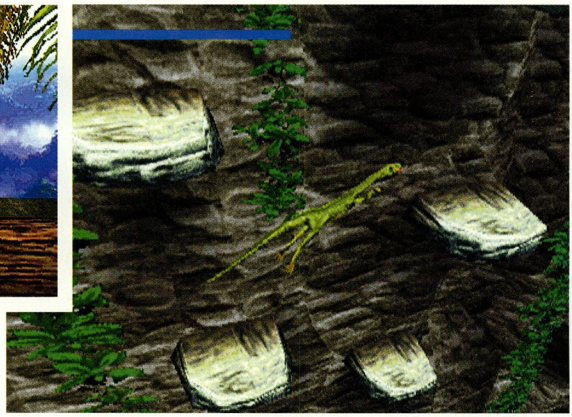
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ng alphas





The designers at Dreamworks have updated traditional side-scrolling elements and placed them in a 3D environment

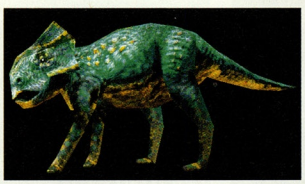
"We thought very early on that no game would be complete if it didn't allow you to be a dinosaur and see what that was like"

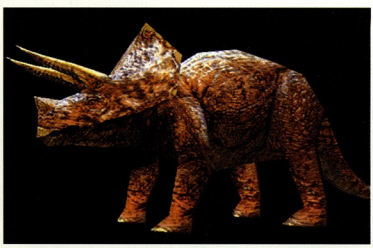
Patrick Gilmore, Producer

designers are shooting for, the game's control shouldn't let the player down. All the characters have been modeled and MIME-animated as single-mesh objects, instead of hierarchical collections of separate parts, with arms, legs, head, and so on being different objects. This is somewhat more taxing for the game's animators but has two important results. First, the creatures all have smooth outer skins, with no kinks or badly meeting joints — a problem common to even the detailed characters seen in most 3D fighting games. Second, characters do not have to return to a neutral position after performing an action. If a player wishes to jump and attack during an evasive roll, the creature performs the action the moment the control button is pressed, and the game's software simply morphs the intervening frames — a task easily accomplished since the creature is a single, whole object.

The Lost World may break very little ground in terms of play mechanics — multiple branches or not, gameplay consists of many of the same side-scrolling challenges nearly everyone has seen before. However, it features a number of interesting new technological approaches, and a highly imaginative scope based solidly on a terrific license. If the film is a hit (duh), the game should sell blindingly fast. As the debut console title of Dreamworks, it also bodes well for future projects. ng







See the dinosaur, think like the dinosaur, *be* the dinosaur — that's the attitude behind *The Lost World*'s design and implementation

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Need for Speed 2

EA's racing game for car nuts has evolved from a slow snore-fest into a white knuckle ride — so what about the sequel?







On road or off, rest assured *Need for Speed 2* will be faster and more thrill-packed than ever

Format: **PS-X, PC**
Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
Developer: **Electronic Arts**
Release Date: **May**
Origin: **Canada**

EA's *Need for Speed* didn't get off to an auspicious start. With its *Road and Track* license, the game included an on-disk library of information about high-performance vehicles, and should have been a car nut's dream. However, it was also extremely sluggish, and gave the impression of tooling around in a Yugo, rather than a Porsche.

The PC version was much better, however, and the PlayStation version which followed was arguably one of the best racing games in a season of fine racing titles. "Since the 3DO version, we've really worked on the sensation of speed," says Scott Jackson, *Need for Speed 2*'s Senior Artist, "the 3DO version represented a very realistic sensation of speed, but that feels too slow for most players, and for us. See, sim designers traditionally treat a real mile and a game-world mile the same, where more arcade-style games just reduce the time needed to travel the same distance."

Brad Gour, Senior Programmer, concurs, "If you limit yourself to a simulation grounded firmly in reality, you end up with a very slow feeling game. So with *Need for Speed* we take certain liberties with the reality of our model to make it *feel*, rather than look, more realistic. Maybe that's what sets us apart: we start with a real model and then tweak it until it feels the way we think it should — faster, more exciting — without losing touch of the



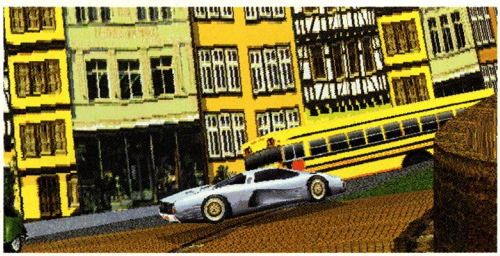
Sadly, this may be as close as any of us ever get to slipping behind the wheel of a high-end European concept car. Still, great game





A game for the true car fanatic, *Need for Speed 2* follows the precedent established by the original, and packs the CD with a library of information on a number of high performance vehicles — it's more than a game, it's an auto nut's resource. Now, if only there was some way to pack in a set of keys...





When the designers talk about "taking liberties" with the game's realism to make it faster and more exciting, they ain't kidding — try flying around this little course in ten minutes in any kind of real sports car







***Need for Speed 2* takes full advantage of advances in PC graphics and PlayStation graphics libraries, pouring in every special effect appropriate for the action**

Racing a high-performance European auto against a school bus doesn't seem like much of a contest, does it?

underlying physics."

This time around, EA is ditching the *Road and Track* license, which had made it easier — and cheaper — to use real high-performance vehicles without having to seek licensing with each auto manufacturer individually. However, the game's relative success has emboldened EA's licensing division, and *Road and Track* has been left behind in favor of genuine agreements with the auto companies themselves. This should mean that the Library portion of the disk will be even more detailed than before.

Which vehicles will be included, however, is anybody's guess. At press time, legal details were still being worked out, but Scott Blackwood, Assistant Producer, is quick to assure, "The cars for the sequel are way beyond the ones in the original. We're talking about very high performance, very exotic automobiles."

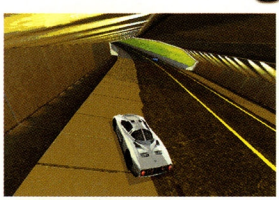
The contribution of Alistair Hirst, lead Sound Engineer, is no less important: "*NFS2* will feature interactive music," Hirst explains, "so the intensity of the music will match you performance in the race.

"Also," he adds, "this time I managed to figure out how to record the cars on eight track digital tape using a variety of microphones in a variety of positions, an approach that's a lot like recording a drum kit or an orchestra. Different microphones pick up all the subtle nuances of the cars as they're pushed to the limit, and the cars we're recording are definitely being pushed to their limits."

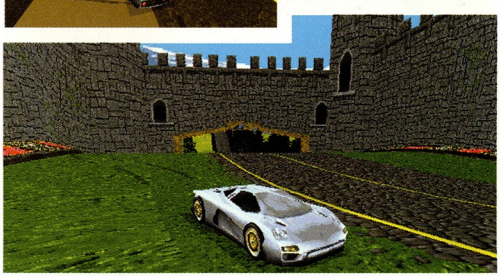
Henno Lemke, *Need for Speed 2*'s producer, sums up: "technology has come a long way since our first products like *Test Drive*, where we couldn't draw textures for the road and couldn't even scale objects as they came down the road — and our frame rate was still only 8-10 fps. Faster frame rates, texture mapping, special effects, CD quality music and sound are all technology driven. *NFS2* will not only have the technology, but faster cars and faster tracks." ng

"The cars for the sequel are way beyond the ones in the original. We're talking about some very high-performance, very exotic automobiles"

Scott Blackwood, Assistant Producer



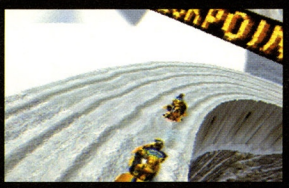




***Need for Speed 2* also shows a marked improvement over the often drab backgrounds of the original, jazzing up the courses with beautifully designed stretches of countryside, and more urban landmarks as well**


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Flying Saucer

Forget "X-Files" — developer PostLinear and publisher Any River blow the lid off the U.F.O. conspiracy

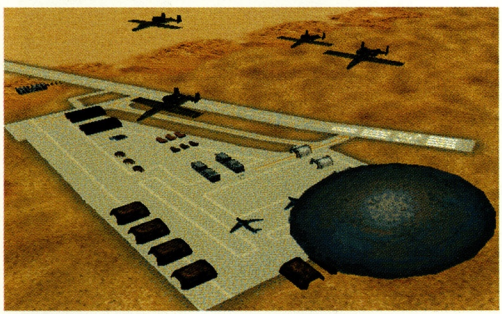


These early screenshots of Area 51 and Tikal feature placeholder sky and land textures, but pretty much capture the look of the game



Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Any River**
Developer:	**PostLinear**
Release Date:	**Spring 1997**
Origin:	**U.S.**

Ron Martinez was formerly a V.P. of Business and Creative Services at Spectrum Holobyte. Now he's C.E.O. of PostLinear Entertainment, a company born some 18 months ago. "We founded the company to create high-end, real-time 3D action-adventure experiences," he says. With five projects currently in development, the 20-person company is growing rapidly. However, Martinez immediately dispels any notion that he's a dreamy newcomer, stressing that good content, not packaging, sells games. "The greatest games out there feature original worlds," he insists. Indeed, Martinez says it was his interest in working with people who create original properties, and don't rely on licenses, that compelled him to leave Spectrum.



The saucer descends for attack on Area 51. The HUD for the cockpit view wasn't finished at press time, so all shots are from the external viewpoint

Flying Saucer is original: a real-time, 3D, aerial combat game in which players pilot a flying saucer. The player is Boone Walker, whose girlfriend Emily gets abducted. Being a devoted boyfriend, Boone steals a U.F.O. from Area 51 and sets out to find Emily.

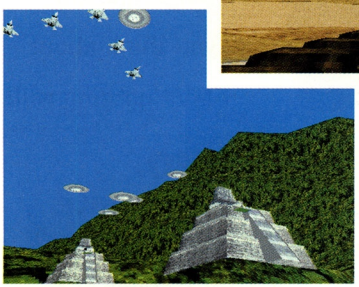
"We found shows like 'X-Files' and

"The greatest games out there feature original worlds"

Ron Martinez, C.E.O. of PostLinear







Mountainous terrain offsets the polygonal buildings, creating a detailed 3D look

traditionally flown in films: oblivious to the laws of gravity, always remaining horizontal, stopping and turning on a dime. However, players will find they need every advantage they can get, as the enemies range from traditional high-end military vehicles like jets, stealth fighters, and tanks to secret army reverse-engineered saucers and true alien saucers with the same capabilities as the player's.

To support the fast-paced combat, PostLinear has developed a proprietary rendering technique to realistically render the terrain, yet maintain a high frame rate. But *Saucer* is not just about sci-fi air combat. Players can actually abduct other characters and probe them for information — with a mind probe, that is.

'Dark Skies' plumb a common well, an underground river of myth about flying saucers, aliens, and deals struck between our government and extra-terrestrial agents." Martinez says. "This is our version."

According to Producer Damon Dean, the game will feature over 20 levels, beginning above Area 51 where players will immediately put the saucer to the test in battle with army tanks and fighter jets. From there, players visit other areas of the globe commonly associated with U.F.O. sightings, including the stone monoliths in Avesbury, England, the Mayan temples of Tikal, the Egyptian pyramids, and the craters of Tunguska, Siberia. Once mission objectives are met on Earth, players gain entry to a "jump tower" which enables them to access deep space and pit their skills directly against an alien race threatening Earth.

The saucer is from an advanced alien race, and so it doesn't control quite the way players expect airborne craft to. In fact, the designers have gone to great lengths to see that the saucer flies the way saucers have

Abductee candidates include a research scientist, a corrupt general, and Jeckyl, a hybrid alien/human. According to Gareth Davis, Producer at PostLinear, the mind-reading clips are flashy FMV shorts designed to give the player clues to advancing the game. "It's not required that you watch them," Davis says, "but they'll reward players who don't mind a little homework." The audio effects are supplemented with lots of voice samples, and the music will be similar to that of *Magic Carpet*'s, in that airy flight music is heard when exploring the world, and more ominous tracks play while in combat.

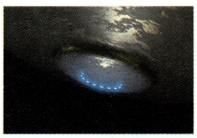
There undoubtedly had to be some weird U.F.O. phenomena related to the development of the game. Sure enough, Davis explains that a member of the development staff was approached by a woman who told him she had been an abducted and that aliens told her to tell him about "Geodethic spheres," apparently used to abduct humans, and to have these spheres put into the game.

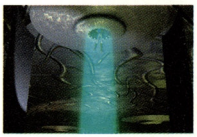
"So," Davis says with a grin, "we put them in the game, because how do we know they don't really exist?"





Animation pros WildBrain provided 10 minutes of cut-scene footage





To lend it some character, the saucer itself stars in a few rendered cut scenes

Players can actually abduct other characters and probe them for information



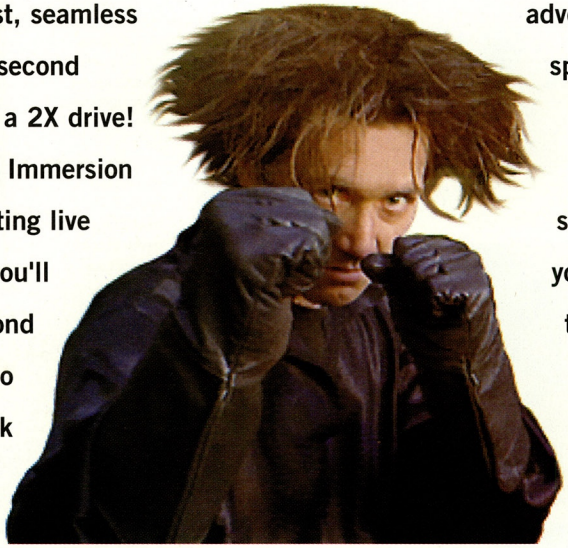




The detailed cut scenes blend 2D animation with 3D backgrounds (top)

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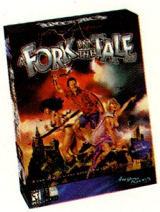
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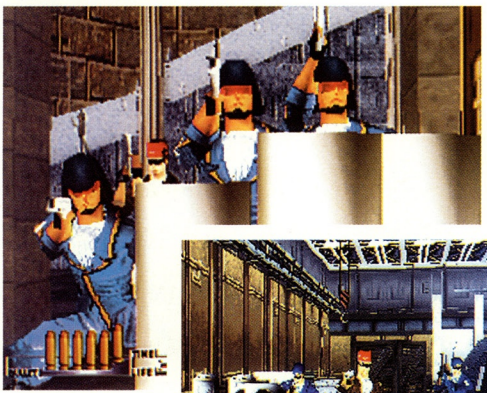
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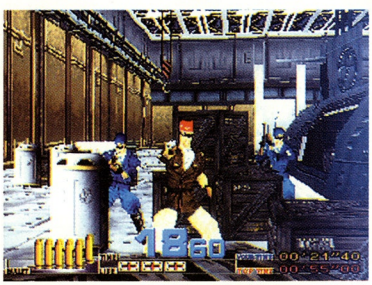
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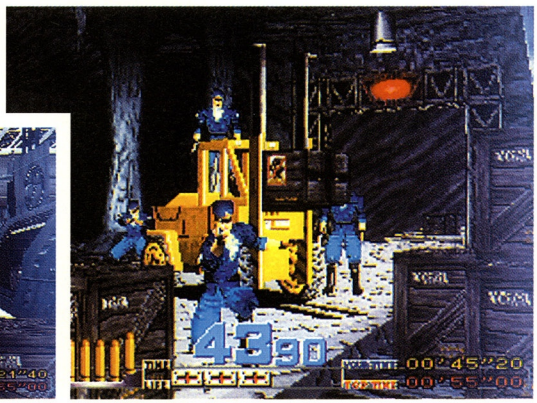


Time Crisis

Namco's conversion of its gun-totin' coin-op comes to Sony's machine, along with another new lightgun peripheral







Time Crisis enables players to automatically reload ammunition when they maneuver into a hiding place

Format: PlayStation
Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco
Release Date: Spring 1997
Origin: Japan

***Time Crisis's* hide-and-shoot concept adds a fresh angle to the otherwise standard gameplay**

Debuting in arcades a year ago, Namco's *Time Crisis* muscled in on the most limited genre, the gun game, and into a territory dominated by Sega's *Virtua Cop* series.

To distinguish it from its critically acclaimed competition, Namco incorporated a pedal system, which players depressed during play to hide from the enemy. This hide-and-shoot concept added a fresh angle to otherwise standard gameplay.

Unlike games such as *Virtua Cop 2*, *Time Crisis* puts the player in cramped stairwells and other enclosed environments. Enemy routines seem more complex than those of Sega's games, ensuring the bad guys don't merely line up as cannon fodder.

The PlayStation conversion, in early development, looks promising. Its polygonal enemies move around fluidly without a hint of slowdown, even in the most ambitiously constructed stages.

And to bring the coin-op experience home faithfully, Namco has developed a PlayStation-specific lightgun called the GunCon. Instead of creating a pedal controller, however, Namco designed the lightgun with an extra fire button on its side, which could be used in subsequent titles as a grenade-launch control.

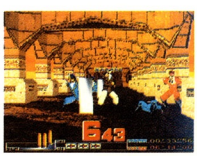
Unlike the coin-op's gun, however, PlayStation's version won't feature the force-feedback recoil, in order to keep the cost down.

The GunCon won't be released until Namco's conversion of *Gun Bullet* hits PlayStation, incidentally. In the meantime, *Time Crisis* players will use a standard controller plugged in port two to effect hiding. Those planning to use Konami's lightgun instead of Namco's will be disappointed: the game will not recognize other third-party hardware.

Namco plans to include at least two modes of play for PlayStation *Time Crisis*, including "coin-op" and "arranged" (the latter believed to include bonus stages), which will help allay fears concerning the brevity of the game's arcade version.



Although your route is predetermined, varied camera work spices things up







Time Crisis's warehouse setting looks somewhat like Sega's *V-Cop* scenery

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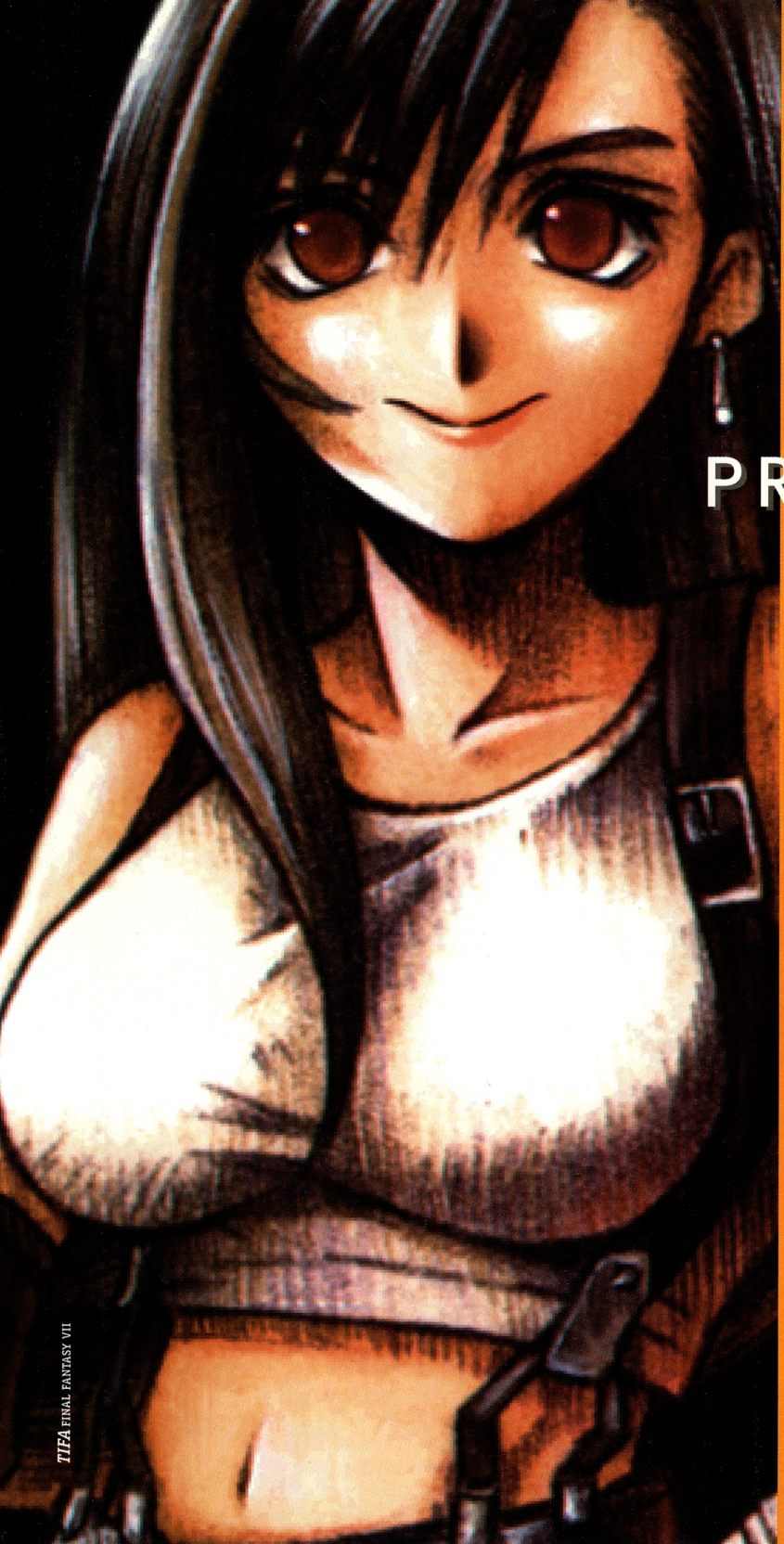
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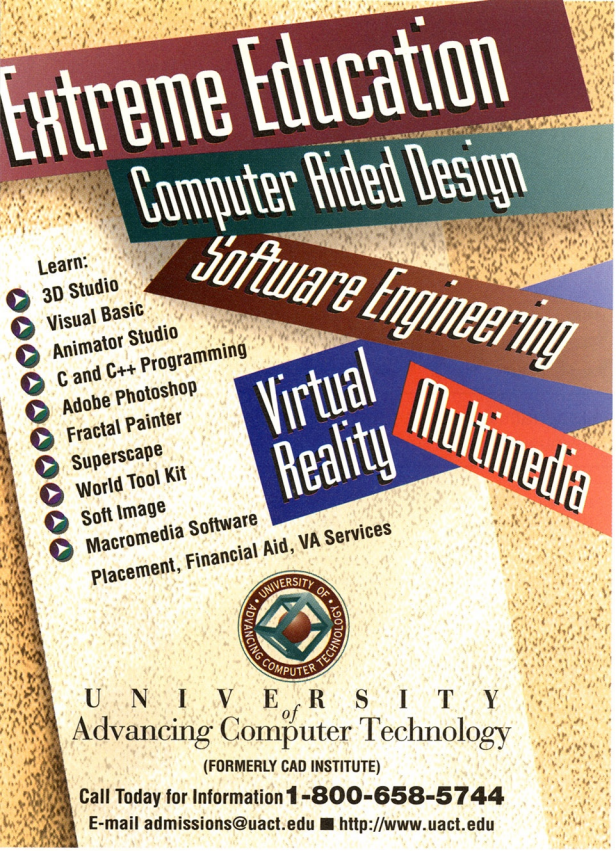
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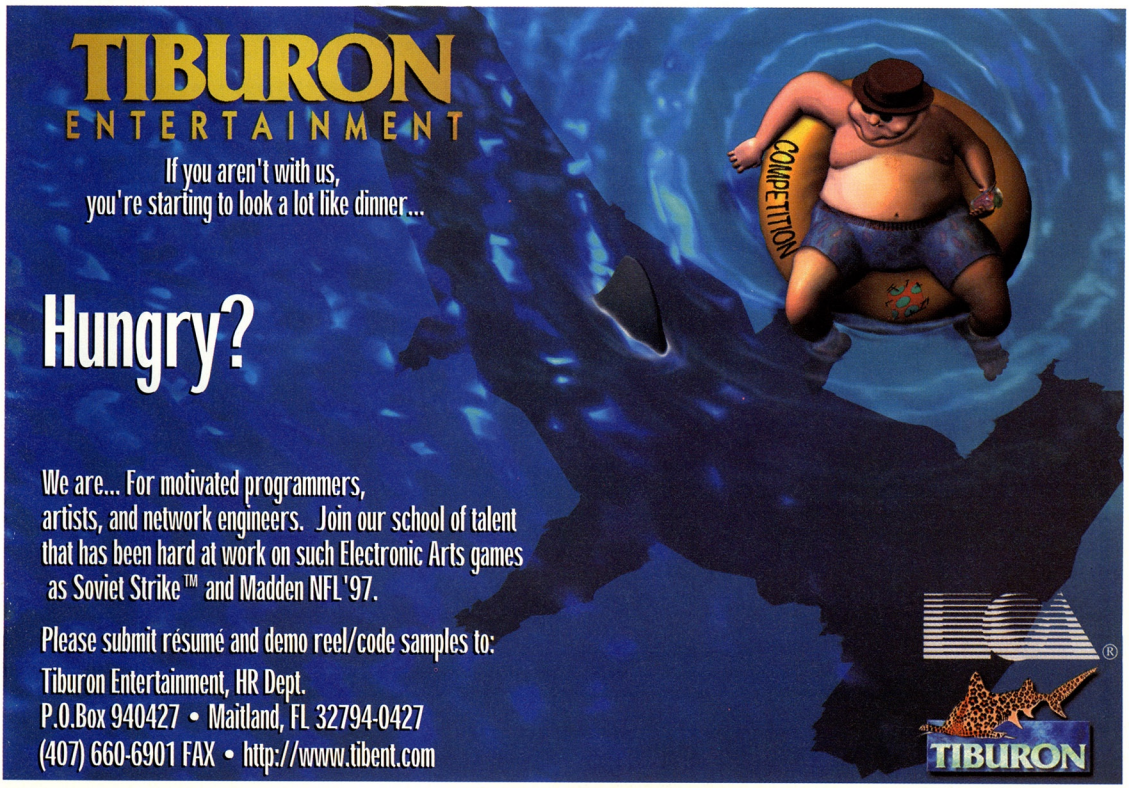


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MARCH EVENTS

M 3 — 6:00PM

CONTEST
Win a special customized PlayStation in this *PSX Power* sponsored contest.

T 4 — 4:00PM

SUPER Q & A DAY
Today's *Next Generation* Q&A will answer 30 of your burning questions.

W 5 — 6:00PM

CONTEST
N64.com will host an online contest with Otaku items as prizes. In all, 10 cool toys, stickers, or wacky games will be handed to *N64.com* readers.

T 6 — 1:00PM

POLL
Retro gaming: Single screen games vs. Polygon madness. Which is better? You decide in this *Saturn World* poll.

F 7 — 6:00PM

WIN BIG!
Test your gaming skills and win the game of your choice for the system of your choice in our huge *Ultra Game Players* trivia quiz.

10 — 3:00PM

SNEAK PEEK
PSX Power gives you an exclusive first look at a major new PlayStation game.

11 — 6:00PM

POLL
What's your prediction for the M2? Success? Failure? Never see the market? Let the world know what you think with this *Next Generation* poll.

12 — 1:00PM

DOOM CONTEST
In conjunction with Midway Home Entertainment, *N64.com* will hold a Doom 64 contest, with questions based on previous Doom 64 reports found only on *N64.com*. The winners will receive free Doom 64 games for the Nintendo 64.

13 — 6:00PM

POLL
Role Playing Games: Why are they good, and how come they're not as popular outside Japan? Take the *Saturn World* poll.

14 — 6:00PM

ASK THE EXPERTS
Ultra Game Players sends your questions straight to the top. Ask Nintendo why Luigi isn't in Mario 64, or find out why Sonic Xtreme was put on hold. Anything you want to know, we'll tell you the answer, online.

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17 6:00PM

ASK SONY

Send your questions about Sony and the PlayStation to ***PSX Power***, and we'll pass them on to Sony. Sony's answers will be posted on the site soon after.

18 6:00PM

POLL

What's your favorite 3D shooter for the PlayStation? Vote now at ***Next Generation.***

19 4:00PM

TOP TEN LIST

Send in your top 10 games, and help to create a games wish list to be sent to Nintendo of America. ***N64.com*** will post the 'What gamers want' poll on this day.

20 6:00PM

NETLINK GAMERS UNITE

Get to know your fellow NetLink users! NetLink owners and gamers can find out who owns what and who wants to challenge on ***Saturn World's*** E-mail white pages.

21 6:00PM

INDUSTRY SECRETS

Ultra Game Players exposes the muck behind Mario, the truth about Tetris. Scandal, gossip and crime in the games industry. Your chance to get the skinny in our exclusive exposé.

24 3:00PM

CONTEST

PSX Power.gives away a massive Street Fighter package, including Street Fighter Alpha 1 & 2, a set of collectible Street Fighter 2 figurines, and other cool SF stuff.

25 1:00PM

FIVE DEMO DAY

Five new PC/Mac demos are added to the ***Next Generation*** site for your downloading pleasure.

26 6:00PM

INTERVIEW

Ask your questions in an exclusive online interview with a developer from a Nintendo 64 third-party developer on ***N64.com's*** Palace.

27 6:00PM

PALACE CHAT

Get to know the developers for the latest in Saturn gaming only on the ***Saturn World*** Palace.

28 3:00PM

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Game reviews so you know what's what

84	PlayStation
92	Saturn
94	PC
100	Arcade
103	3DO
103	Genesis
103	Virtual Boy
103	Neo-Geo
103	Super NES
103	Macintosh
103	Nintendo 64

The **Next Generation** staff wants to help you out. We play the new games for days, then review and rate them so you know the hottest games. Our explication of each game is in the text, but refer to the following star guide to understand our rating system.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high-water mark.

★★★★ **Excellent**
A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre, or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★ **Good**
A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★ **Average**
Perhaps competent; certainly uninspired.

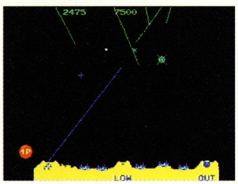
★ **Bad**
Crucially flawed in design or application.

PlayStation

Arcade's Greatest Hits: The Atari Collection One

Publisher: Midway
Developer: Digital Eclipse

Old arcade games don't die, they just move onto compilation discs,



***Atari's Greatest Hits*: a must have for any serious gamer**

where vengeful PlayStation owners can spend hours trying to master them, as if to win back the buckets of quarters such games drained from their youths (well, maybe that's just us). Regardless, the names on the disc speak for themselves: *Battlezone*, *Asteroids*, *Tempest*, *Missile Command*, *Centipede*, and *Super Breakout* — all in their original arcade form.

As with other classic game discs, the games in *Atari Collection* run on their original code through an emulator, which guarantees the exact same graphics and audio that players will remember from the arcade. Even the same bugs are intact. Of course, the controls suffer some when you play with a PlayStation controller, most notably with *Tempest* and *Super Breakout* where the D-pad is no substitute for a paddle.

Like Williams's *Arcade's Greatest Hits*, this *Atari Collection* features video clips with the original designers, including Ed Logg (creator of *Asteroids* and *Centipede*) and Dave Theurer (maker of *Tempest* and *Missile Command*). Unlike the Williams disc, however, the history is narrated over a slideshow of memorabilia, and the insightful clips run longer, dispelling ancient rumors and relating anecdotes of Atari coin-op's golden age.

A helpful menu system enables players to switch directly between all six games, and loading time is minimal. The classics here are addictive, and with the exception of *Super Breakout*, they are all worthwhile (are you paying attention Namco?). Any follow-up to this first *Atari Collection* will be hard to beat.

Rating: ★★★★

Area 51

Publisher: Midway
Developer: Mesa Logic/ Perfect/Tantalus

PlayStation really falls behind Saturn in the category of quality shooting gallery games (the possible exception being *Die Hard Trilogy*), and as a fairly successful arcade title, *Area 51* tries, but fails to gain any ground on Saturn's *Virtua Cop* series.



***Area 51* is actually kind of fun when hooked up for simultaneous two-player action, but how many people own two light guns?**

As a member of a U.S. paramilitary unit, the player must infiltrate top-secret military base Area 51 and annihilate a force of body-snatching aliens. Moving from scenario to scenario on rails, players must shoot enemies who pop-up from behind barrels and crates, diverting their aim just long enough to reload or shoot stray targets for power-ups and bonuses.

Graphically, the rendered scenery mixed with some FMV made for impressive detail when the coin-op game debuted in 1995. But now in 1997, the sprite-based enemies, each with just one cheesy death animation, do little to wow an audience, and the conversion feels less than inspired. While the numerous background breakables add a nice touch, what really saves this game is the solid audio, with good gunplay effects, alien howls, and mood setting music. Turn off the sound, and the game feels like a slightly speedier American Laser Game shooter.

Even with Konami's lime green light gun, the game essentially fails to excite players the way the arcade version once did. With a control pad guiding your cross-hairs, *Area 51* becomes a shallow test of pattern memorization. Unwavering (or perhaps just undiscriminating) fans of the arcade version may get a kick out of it, but pistol connoisseurs may want to hold out for Namco's *Time Crisis* (see page 75).

Rating: ★★

Burning Road

Publisher: Playmates
Developer: TOKA

If there is one genre next-generation systems boast an abundance of superior titles in, it's racing games. The top titles usually come from powerhouses like Sega, Namco, and Psygnosis, and so if nothing else, *Burning*



A lack of depth keeps *Burning Road* from the upper tier of racing games, but an insidious AI makes the game noteworthy

Road distinguishes itself by being the strongest third-party racing game outside this core group.

The graphics are on par with many of the better racing titles, and the high frame rate yields smooth, fast-paced gameplay, but overall the game leans towards a "bumper car" mentality. Unlike some racing games that emphasize precision driving, *Burning Road* is more about bouncing off walls and opponents and clawing your way to the front of the pack. Racing purists may wince at the lack of realism, but a superior computer AI means the opponents are just as ruthless. *Burning Road* also features a link mode to give the game added life for those who have a link cable.

The most noticeable shortcoming is in the control, which isn't terrible, but only the best handling cars in the game offer anything approaching adequate response. But what ultimately knocks *Burning Road* out of the top tier is the lack of depth, due to its limited number of tracks. Games like *Andretti Racing* and *Formula 1* have spoiled race fans with their double digit track offerings, and as challenging as *Burning Road* is, the tracks in the game become overly familiar too soon.

Overall, *Burning Road* is entertaining in its own right, but lacking in just enough of the essentials to prevent it from being a superior game.

Rating: ★★★

Cool Boarders

Publisher: Sony

Developer: UEP Systems

The first thing to know about *Cool Boarders* is that it is really a four-star game trapped in a three-star body. Surprisingly, the first dedicated snowboarding game for PlayStation is a great deal of fun to play and offers a challenge like nothing else on the system. However, too many goofy flaws keep it from being a total success.

A mix of speed and acrobatics, the game does an extremely nice job of providing a variety of thrills for the gamer. Whether carving around the corners on the expert course or pulling off a 720-degree spin with a tail grab off one of the special trick jumps, you realize the action level is high. Another nice part of *Cool Boarders* is the wide variety of equipment to choose from, around which the player can tailor the experience.

But problems start to arise in the game's questionable physics, such as bouncing (that's right, bouncing) off of an ill-placed rock and then mysteriously sliding *up* the mountain for a few seconds. Similar anomalies occur when your character gets caught between two barriers and momentarily gets trapped in a pinball simulation, ricocheting from one side to the other. The other major downfall of *Cool Boarders* is the lack of any racing competition. The only way to even simulate a race is to call up a ghost image of yourself performing a previous run.

With all its problems, however, the game still manages to provide several hours of entertainment, and certainly provides hope for *Cool Boarders 2*.

Rating: ★★★



A wholly original and thrilling action game, *Cool Boarders* nicely fills a gap in PlayStation's line-up

Floating Runner

Publisher: THQ

Developer: XING Interactive

In the grand scheme of PlayStation releases, *Floating Runner* causes hardly a ripple. It's a game so devoid of uniqueness or personality that the only thing saving the title is that there's nothing in it worth hating.

You play as either a boy named Lay or a girl named Cress, and gameplay centers around moving in a 3D environment and either shooting or stomping on some generic cute enemies such as mice or snowmen. Inexplicably, the player is shackled to two camera perspectives, neither of which offers a view of the horizon, or gives the player an idea of which direction to go. This basic inability to determine one's location results in confused wandering. The look of the game can only be described as generic polygon graphics, and the world is far less open to exploration than it should be; it's restricted by obstacles such as trees and even gradual slopes.



Cute and harmless, there is just enough gameplay in *Floating Runner* to keep it from being insulting

Floating Runner actually controls nicely for the type of game it is. Jumping, running, and even side flipping can be done with an ease and smoothness that would have been welcome in other, more high profile platform games. The level layouts are actually well thought-out and could be entertaining if the camera view didn't constantly make traversing them a chore.

Indeed, the game's light-hearted tone could appeal to younger gamers, but the difficulty of the later levels really prevents it from working as a children's game. Overall, *Floating Runner* is just like *Super Mario 64* or *Jumping Flash* with the fun and detail removed.

Rating: ★★

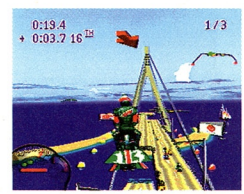
Jet Moto

Publisher: Sony

Developer: SingleTrac

Based around a fictional vehicle called a *Jet Moto* (a sort of hybrid jet ski/motorcross bike/hovercraft), the racing experience in *Jet Moto* provokes a comparison with Nintendo's highly touted *Wave Race 64*. But in all fairness, the comparison isn't truly appropriate: where *Wave Race* is based around an existing vehicle that provides a basis of reference, there is no actual criterion for criticism on whether a jet moto game accurately emulates the "jet motoing" experience.

That said, *Jet Moto* controls well enough, but too often the game feels vague and slow, with jet moto acrobatics seemingly performed in an atmosphere consisting of molasses. This seems to be just the way the vehicle handles, not the result of sloppy programming, so while perhaps the game can't be truly lambasted for its unique feel, it does take a little getting used to. In terms of graphics, *Jet Moto* again can't be simply classified as good or bad. There are numerous instances when the game environments are breathtaking (death defying leaps off tropical island cliffs), but there are other moments when the graphics verge on laughably bad (racing around "walls" of swamp reeds).



Neither jet ski nor motorcross bike, *Jet Moto* offers a unique racing challenge all its own

Yet despite these odd control and graphic characteristics, *Jet Moto* remains a lot of fun. With intense, challenging races featuring twenty competitors on ten unique tracks, it never fails to be compelling. Several different kinds of jet motos, alternate pathways, hidden shortcuts, terrain sensitive traction and speed, and ruthless computer AI result in races that require strategy as well as reflexes. And

with a two-player, split-screen mode, customizable race criteria, and season-long championships rounding out this feature-laden title, *Jet Moto* can perhaps best be described as a game in which the whole equals more than the sum of its parts.
Rating: ★★★★

Namco Museum Volume 3
Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco
The first *Namco Museum* was really good, the second really wasn't, but the third volume of classics redeems the series. If you enjoy the oldies, *Ms. Pac Man*, *Dig-Dug*, and *Galaxian* are the best of the six total games that make this disc worth owning. *Pole Position II* offers good support, but the remaining two, *The Tower of Druaga* and *Phozon*, do not.

Phozon is a puzzler wannabe without any redeeming puzzle elements, and dungeon-mazer *Druaga* shows its age with extremely slow gameplay and dubious control.



Namco Museum Vol. 3* offers such retrogames as *Dig Dug

As in the previous *Classic* discs, the games run through a JAMMA emulator, so players get the original code right down to the same start-up test patterns, and the original dip switch settings (which enable players to adjust the same options once available to arcade operators). The audio is perfectly reproduced with a minor omission: the starting voice sample is missing from *Pole Position II*.

As before, players can also navigate a museum filled with memorabilia from a first-person perspective. In this newest collection, the loading time required to peruse the exhibits has been cut significantly, but unfortunately, since the series is developed in Japan, most of the old game art remains in Japanese. However, this latest version also offers some light-hearted humor (look for a surprise inside *Ms. Pac Man*'s house).

With two volumes still to come, Namco is clearly stretching a series that could have been condensed into three discs without the superfluous B titles. But the number of true classics on *Volume 3* outweigh the ones that never should have been unearthed.
Rating: ★★★

Persona Revelations
Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Atlus
Burning up the charts in Japan, *Persona Revelations* challenges the notion that RPGs have to be about regal matters, cave exploration, and other pursuits of olde. Instead, *Persona* takes the fresh approach of creating characters and a storyline in a modern day setting, crafted around several teenagers and their battle with the undead, (complete with plenty of street slang and attitude). The game also challenges the idea that RPGs must be 2D games featuring superdeformed characters shown from an

PlayStation

MADDEN-BEATER

Gameday '97
Publisher: Sony
Developer: Sony Interactive Studios
The original *Gameday* was the coming out party for Sony Interactive Studios, which has grown into one of gaming's premier sports developers. With *Gameday '97*, Sony has proved that last year wasn't a fluke — this is the best football game to date.



A word of caution: *GameDay*'s hard-hitting tackles are so vicious, your fingers might wind up hurting

The graphics are similar to last year's, with a few additions: the players now have numbers on their jerseys and all of the NFL stadiums are accurately represented. The sound samples of bone-crunching tackles are awesome and really make each hit feel like a freight train. Also, this year the stat-tracking is much more in-depth and accurate. However, these additions would all be expected in a sports sequel. What *Gameday '97* does to separate itself from the pack is add advanced moves and tighten up the gameplay and AI.



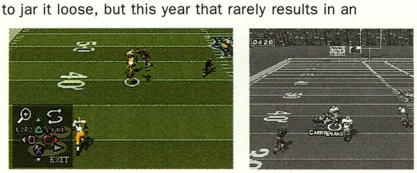
The smooth graphics of last year are back, but this time the players have numbers on their jerseys as well

The advanced moves give the player more control than ever on the football field, enabling the offensive player to dive, spin, stiff arm, speed burst, make a one-handed catch, dive over the top, juke, or jump over a tackle — and that's just on offense. There's an equal set of weapons on defense. At first these advanced moves make the control seem a little complex, but as you play more and more, you begin to uncover proper uses for all of these moves, and the sheer depth of the game becomes apparent.

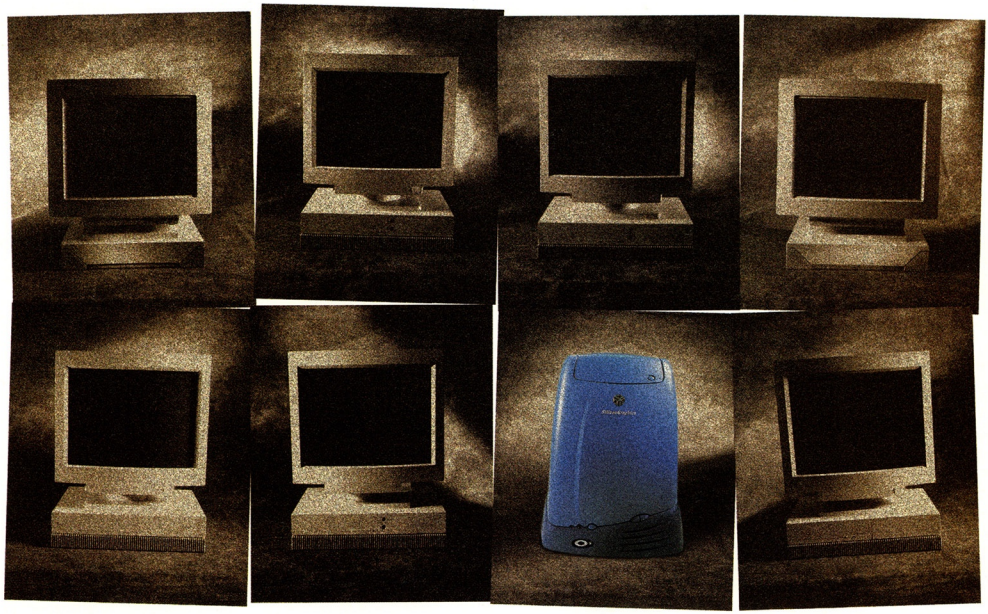
Gameday '97 also outshines games like *Madden '97* with its computer AI. In *Madden* several "money" plays always work against a human or computer opponent, but not in *Gameday*. Granted, every player will have their favorite plays, but human opponents can stop any play they know is coming, and the computer doesn't let the same play be run over and over again.

All this said, *Gameday* is far from perfect. The best way to play defense is still to hit the receiver as soon as he catches the ball to jar it loose, but this year that rarely results in an interception. Plus, the better receivers won't cough up the ball nearly as often. It isn't a perfect way to play defense, but no other game has come up with a better system yet.

Gameday '97 is a hard-hitting, fast-paced football game with more moves, options, and playability than anything out there. Even if you already own *Madden '97*, this is a game every football fan must have.
Rating: ★★★★★



Advanced moves like the one-handed catch really add a new layer of gameplay to *Gameday '97*



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Easily some of the best graphics in an RPG yet, *Persona Revelations* looks like a 32-bit RPG

overhead perspective. Instead, *Persona Revelations* has gone for a more realistic 3D style with a mix of game engines including first-person, graphic adventure-style still screens, and an overhead 3D model for long distance travel. Unfortunately, the constant shifting from one style game to the next is often a source of frustration that ends up being one of the game's biggest drawbacks.

Beyond the lack of focus on a single game engine, *Persona* also suffers from a general detachment from the plot. Missing is a fluid unraveling of the story, and in its place is a fragmented disclosure of the facts, interrupted entirely too often by battle scenes. The fighting can be occasionally engrossing, with its dramatic *Persona* spells drawn from hidden spirits within each of the characters, and liberal use of automatic weapons. For the most part, however, the battles are simply in the way.

Persona is not without its moments, and the fresh approach of creating a modern day tale without losing that mystical edge is encouraging. But in the end, the game lacks the kind of cohesion needed to be called great.

Rating: ★★★

Re-Loaded

Publisher: Interplay
Developer: Gremlin

The original *Loaded* was one of the first PlayStation games to showcase some of the amazing transparencies and lighting effects that are now commonplace on the system. The game also featured frantic shooting, a demented attitude, and gallons of blood — all of which were relatively absent from PlayStation games at the time. However, a year and a half later, we've seen all these elements in much better titles, which ups the ante for any sequel. Unfortunately, *Re-Loaded* never even gets to the table.

This sequel features the same insane characters plus a few new ones, and this time they get to venture outside the asylum more often into open territories. Yet somehow the overall look of *Re-Loaded* doesn't even come up to the same level of quality as the original. The textures are repetitive and the characters are small, pixelated, and lifeless. Beyond the diminished graphics, *Re-Loaded* also has lost the frantic shooting pace of the original. There are fewer enemies, and players wind up spending more time finding the end of the level than shooting like a madman. There isn't anything wrong with a game of exploration (just look at *Tomb Raider*), but *Re-Loaded* is supposed to be an action-packed shooter, and as such just never delivers.



***Re-Loaded* — Blood, gore, and mindless shooting were the key ingredients to *Loaded*, but *Re-Loaded* doesn't capture any of it as well as the first**

Re-Loaded is quite simply a rehash. The same game with worse graphics and less fun. If you're dying for a fast paced shooter, the original *Loaded* can be found in bargain bins for a lot less money, and it's a much better game.

Rating: ★★

Robotron X

Publisher: Midway
Developer: Player1

Before *Loaded*, and even before *Smash TV*, there was the heart-stopping, adrenaline-pumping action of the arcade classic *Robotron*. *Robotron* was, and still is, unparalleled for pure non-stop, shoot-'em-up gameplay. If you're one of the sad few who never had a chance to experience the original first-hand, the object of the game was simple: Shoot. Shoot fast. Shoot everything that moves. Keep shooting. You're always a second away from dying while playing *Robotron*, and that's what makes it great.

Robotron X updates *Robotron* by adding the ability to play in a 3D environment, and while this adds some superficial visual interest, it just doesn't do much for gameplay. The top-down view of the original had the advantage of showing the whole playing field, enabling players to see the advancing enemy hordes way

PlayStation

SMALL MIRACLE



It doesn't look or play quite like anything else, but with its fast pace and unique gameplay, *Nanotek Warrior* is sure to please

Nanotek Warrior

Publisher: Virgin
Developer: Tetragon

The days of frenetic arcade shooters didn't die with the birth of 3D. We've just had to wait for a developer (in this case, Tetragon) creative enough to bring the ten-thrill-a-second experience that embodied 2D shooters to 3D. *Nanotek* does that, and with such brilliance it practically gives rebirth to the genre.

Nanotek is similar in concept to *Tempest*, except it moves and sends players hurtling down the interior and over the exterior of a tube. But the action goes beyond simple shooting and dodging. With excellent control, players can jump, strafe, turn the ship up on its side, flip sideways, and power-up with numerous special weapons, all to navigate the twisty, enemy-laden cylinder.

It's hard to imagine this is Tetragon's first PlayStation game. *Nanotek Warrior* has been almost two years in the making and runs at 30 fps. The Texas-based group of Tetragon developed its own graphic libraries for this project, which may explain why the amazing lighting effects, unique color scheme, and crisp polygonal enemies give it a look all its own. The audio compares to *WipeOut*, with drilling techno music and vibrant sound effects that add to the maniacal pace.

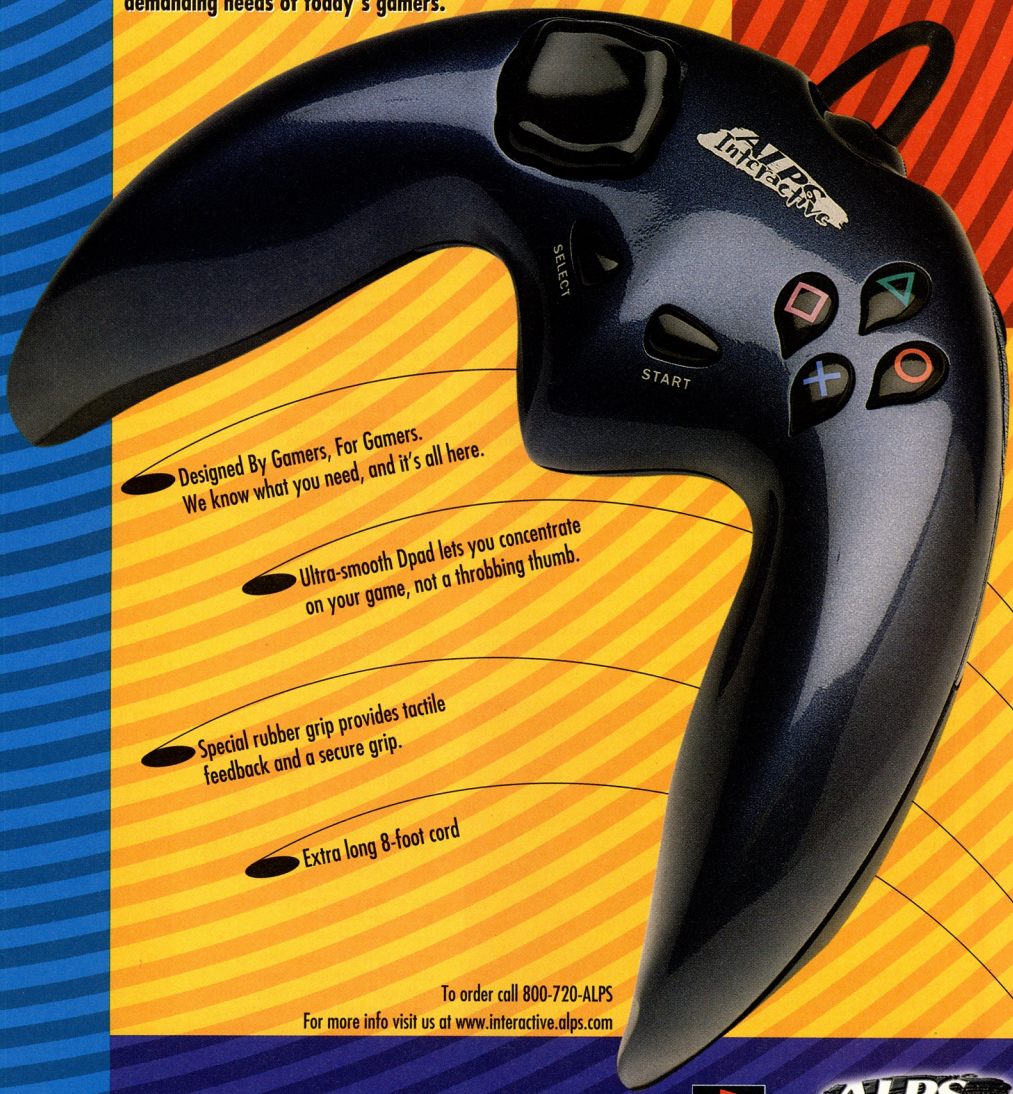
Beyond the many excellent visceral features, the game is well-balanced, making *Nanotek* the "complete package" so rarely found these days. It's arguable that with only eight levels, the game is short, but it's very challenging. With over 70 total enemies/obstacles, including two mid-bosses per level, *Nanotek* avoids the monotonous repetition that plagues lesser shooters. End boss-battles are fought in an arena, almost like a 3D version of the classic *Star Castle*. While the bosses are visually impressive, beating them is fairly straightforward, and it would have also been nice if the game could have implemented more of the angular-shaped tunnels found in the bonus rounds into the regular gameplay. But regardless of the minor faults, *Nanotek* is a must-have for shooter fans, and may convert some who aren't.

Rating: ★★★★

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Robotron X takes the classic gameplay of the original, then confuses things by adding more high tech than the game calls for. Too bad

before they have time to do any damage. With enemies coming from all directions, the 3D playfield is actually a hindrance because the omniscient view is replaced by an angled perspective. Mercifully, the designers had the good sense to offer a number of different perspectives, but the best is still the classic top-down view — in which case, why bother with the polygonal *X* version at all?

The numerous updates of classic games indicates that designers expect the history of the title to do all the work in selling it. Nostalgia value goes far, but it can't carry a game. *Robotron X* lucks out because its original conception — fast and furious shooting action — hasn't gone out of style, and the mechanics haven't been fooled with enough to affect the great gameplay. It will give you a decent bang for your buck, but the original on the *Williams Arcade Classics* disc is still way better.

Rating: ★★★

Space Jam

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Sculptured Software

Well, this time Acclaim has gone too far, whoring out the *NBA Jam* engine one last time, saddling PlayStation with a game that feels disappointingly 16-bit. Players get a choice of either two-on-two or three-on-three hoop matches — no five-on-five, that would be silly — between Bugs's Brigade (including Michael Jordan) and the alien monsters.

The play mechanics are pretty miserable, and game balance heavily favors the Looney Toons, since the only high attributes given to the aliens are rebounding skills. While it's hard to forgive the poor basketball, it's even harder to like *Space Jam* given the disc's numerous carnival-style mini-games, such as a shooting gallery where the player throws basketballs for bullets. They add some variety, but are so simplistic that the effort put into creating them would have been much better spent on improving the core game.

This game was released almost simultaneously with the movie, which leads us to believe it was rushed — it sure plays that way. As a slower paced form of *Jam*, it could be argued that this game is meant for younger players, but then it's complicated by adding an extra button. Go figure. There are multiple backgrounds, which are cartoony and colorful, and it's nice to see some of the supporting Looney Toons kicking around in them, including Marvin the Martian as a referee. But the music from the film is sadly missing.

So what does Acclaim have to offer here? A great basketball game? Nope. A fun showcase for the Warner Bros. characters? Nope. How about a stinking great commercial license with nothing of worth underneath? Yup. And th-th-that's all folks.

Rating: ★



Take the most commercially viable license you can find, add a three year old game engine, and drain it of fun, and you've got *Space Jam*

Ten Pin Alley

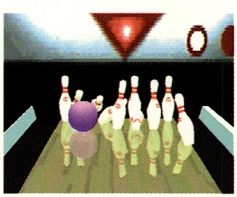
Publisher: ASC Games
Developer: Adrenalin Entertainment

Bowling isn't the most exciting sport and, in theory (and mostly in practice), shouldn't translate into much of a videogame. *Ten Pin Alley*, however, proves that theory completely wrong and is the perfect party game, with multiplayer capabilities, wacky characters, and solid game mechanics.

Players can choose from a variety of bowlers, from a big Samoan who hurls the ball with amazing velocity to a little girl who actually rolls the ball down the alley with two hands. The way the game is played depends entirely on the attributes of the bowler. This variety lets everyone find a favorite bowler and style — again, perfect for parties. The mechanics are an amazingly accurate simulation of real-world physics, enabling players to control (within the abilities of the character) spin, release, point, angle, and do anything else a real bowler can. Naturally, with this kind of accuracy the first couple of rounds result in numerous gutter balls, but with a little practice it quickly becomes the kind of strike contest we all wish we could manage in real life.

Of course, unless you're a serious pin-head, it still isn't the kind of game you're going to spend hours alone in the basement playing, but it's definitely the kind of game that guarantees enjoyment each time it's popped in the machine. *Ten Pin Alley* may not take the gaming world by storm, but players looking for a good, fun game to challenge their friends to won't be disappointed.

Rating: ★★★★



The climax of the perfect party game: *Ten Pin Alley*

Virtual Pool

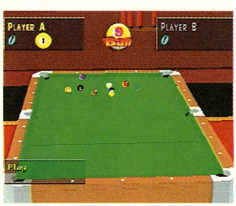
Publisher: Interplay
Developer: Gremlin

Over a year ago, *Virtual Pool* for the PC established itself as the best pool simulation ever. It even came with a guarantee that if playing *Virtual Pool* didn't improve your real pool game you'd get your money back.

PlayStation's incarnation of this classic billiards game is almost identical to its PC predecessor. The only real difference is that most PlayStation gamers don't have a mouse, and playing with a mouse is the best way to play this game. Every angle, bounce, and collision is completely accurate on the PC, which is why playing *Virtual Pool* really will help your pool game.

The only problem with *Virtual Pool* is that it is a little slow and it's pretty ugly. Interplay really should have reworked the graphics and speeded up play for the console. But even as a slow and ugly pool game, it is hands down the best one available. *Virtual Pool* is cheaper and less dangerous than nightly trips to the bar, but it still isn't near as much fun.

Rating: ★★★



The graphics haven't improved a bit since the PC version, but the same scientifically correct angles are still the basis for *Virtual Pool*

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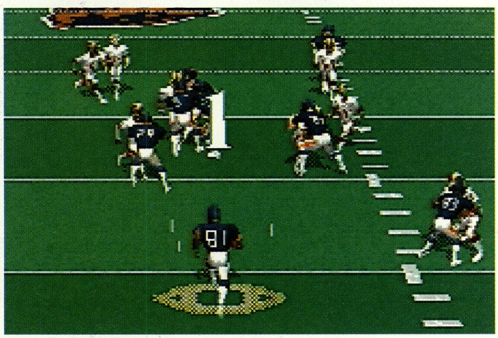
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rating saturn

Saturn

NFL '97
Publisher: Sega Sports
Developer: GameTek:



Joe Montana Sports Talk Football* looked and played better than the garbage offered here in *NFL '97

Saturn has been out for over two years, yet somehow this is the first football game the once proud Sega Sports division has been able to release. Was it worth the wait? In a word: no. Gamers looking for evidence that Sega has forgotten that sports games are what made the Genesis a success need look no further.

Not only did it take two years to put out a dismal football game, but Sega didn't even make it — they purchased the game from sports newcomer Gametek, who also sold the PlayStation version to Konami (*Jimmy Johnson's NFL '97*, which, by the way, looks much better).

The stadium graphics and the play editor in *NFL '97* are the lone bright spots in an otherwise forgettable game. The player graphics can't even compare to *Madden* on Genesis, and the passing game is atrocious. When passing, an arc appears showing the QB (not to mention the defense) exactly where the pass is going to go, then you take control of the receiver and try to get to the ball. One small problem: often the location of the ball is off-screen so you have to guess which way to run. If the passing arc had been used so you could pinpoint your passes it would be forgivable, but it doesn't. The only apparent purpose of the arc is to let the defense know exactly where the ball is going.

The lifeless graphics and ill-conceived passing arc are just two examples of what makes this one of the worst football games in years. Other elements like poor control just add to the already unpleasant experience. The only question remaining is what happened to the people at Sega responsible for good football games like *NFL'95*?

Rating: ★

Toshinden URA
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Tamsoft

Battle Arena Toshinden was released at the time of PlayStation's launch. The game showcased the graphical prowess of the system. Since then, Sega has twice attempted to put it on Saturn, and both times its attempts have failed miserably.

The first and most noticeable problems with *Toshinden URA* are the muddy vision and choppy animation. The game looks like a muddied version of its PlayStation counterpart, and once you take away the glitz, what you're left with can only be described as a poorly designed fighting game, with some of the lamest new characters since *MK3* (the stiff-limbed schoolgirl is especially worthy of derision).

Any time you can beat the entire game on the hardest difficulty by mashing on one button — with your eyes closed — there's something very wrong. With *Toshinden URA* you can do exactly that. Another problem is Saturn's controller, which is usually perfect for fighting games like *SFA2* and *VF2*, but *Toshinden* was designed for PlayStation's pad, and just doesn't have the same intuitive feel on the Saturn.



The lower res on Saturn really shows up on *Toshinden* URA, and it muddies the picture to the point where you'll want to get some Windex for the screen

With all of the competition in the 3D fighting arena, a poorly designed, choppy, and basically ugly game like *Toshinden URA* has no chance.

Rating: ★

Saturn

BANG UP JOB

Virtua Cop 2
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega

There's a good reason why gamers get excited about new AM2 games for the arcade. It's the same reason Saturn owners have reason to gloat a little when those game are ported to their system: AM2 makes some of the best games in the business. The 1995 *Virtua Cop*, *Sega Rally*, and *Virtua Fighter 2* lineup singlehandedly saved Saturn from being totally written off as a second class console. Although this year's arcade lineup isn't quite as spicy, *Virtua Cop 2* is certainly reason to rejoice and for Saturn owners to smile — especially those with a bright orange Sega Stunner collecting dust next to the TV.





Bigger, faster and just plain better than the original, *Virtua Cop 2* is a great light gun game (above). The car chase scene is just one of the exciting new scenarios waiting in *Virtua Cop 2* (left)

Not an enormous jump beyond the original (conceptually speaking), *Virtua Cop 2* faithfully upholds the polygon-based, light-gun shooter standards set in *Virtua Cop* while upping the ante in a few key areas. Probably the most important improvement over the original is the impressive increase in the number of characters onscreen, and the added intensity of scenes like a car chase. Taking the game one step closer to the feel of a big budget action movie, *Virtua Cop 2* seems to have more "movement" to it. The game also has a few tricks up its sleeve in the form of route choices, extremely interactive backgrounds, and some truly menacing boss characters. Whether chasing down an armored car while picking off bad guys hanging out the window, or dodging bullets in a speeding subway train, this game is just short of being described as a roller coaster ride by some hack movie critic in the midwest and even closer to being described as an "edge of your seat thriller" by this reviewer on the West coast.

Rating: ★★★★



The addition of route choices helps to give this game a more fulfilling replay value

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PC

Amber: Journeys Beyond

Publisher: Graphic Simulations
Developer: Hue Forest

There have been so many *Myst*-clones it almost makes us wonder why we come to work in the morning. However, if you're a fan of the sub-genre — well, Heaven help you, but you may feel that some such titles actually border on being worth playing. Amber could be one of those.

The story involves life after death, plenty of ghosts, and of course tons of puzzles to solve. The graphics are the same rendered still screens that are standard for this sort of thing, so standard that the games are starting to run together and it's getting tougher and tougher to tell them apart — pretty, but static and two-dimensional. Like *Noir* (also reviewed this issue), the game was built in Director, so the look and feel of it is slow, and interactive in only the most technical sense — you point, you click, stuff changes (note we don't say "moves").

The only thing that makes *Amber* stand out from the crowd is the engrossing, genuinely scary story. The best way to play this game is in the dark, and you might find yourself getting as frightened as if you were reading one of Stephen King's best (with about the same level of interactivity). If you overlook the lack of originality in the game's mechanics, you might just enjoy the ride for what it's worth — a scary story told with nice graphics and some boggling puzzles.

Rating: ★★★



This woman is the reason you're exploring the house in *Amber* — she's messing with your mind, and it has something to do with life after death

Death Rally

Publisher: Apogee Software
Developer: Remedy Entertainment

Once again Apogee reminds us shareware can be fun. *Death Rally* is a simple, playable, enjoyable combat racing game with a retro top-down perspective and a whole lot of action.



The top-down perspective of *Death Rally* may be low-tech, but the game is fun

You start with a clunky little Volkswagen armed with a machine gun. Enter and survive enough races and you'll save enough money to buy land mines, armor, bumper spikes, and better cars. The object of the race is simple. Get ahead of your opponents and

PC

GOOD SPORT

Rocket Jockey

Publisher: SegaSoft
Developer: Rocket Science

Well, here's a nice surprise. Rocket Science's *Rocket Jockey* manages, in one fell swoop, to nearly erase the memory of such Sega CD dog-eggs as *Loadstar, Cadillacs and Dinosaurs,* and *Wingnuts* with its surprising mix of style, humor, and fun.



Half the fun of *Rocket Jockey* is simply tormenting your opponents. Here you've snagged a rival's ride, and now you're after your pound of flesh

In *Rocket Jockey*, you're the pilot of a homespun rocket bike (duh), competing in a variety of gladiatorial events. There's only one catch: rockets go really fast, and they aren't exactly known for their maneuverability. So each rocket bike comes equipped with steel cables and grappling hooks for snagging objects such as poles, people, and so on in order to change direction. You'll use these cables to navigate the game's 3D environment from a third-person view, and here's where the fun begins.

The controls for the rocket bike are no more complex than those of *Doom*, and once you get the hang of using the cables for turning and grabbing items, flying around on these rockets is bizarrely enjoyable. The various arenas are filled with poles, pylons, and hazards that you'll need to use to your advantage while avoiding opponents. Each of the three events is different — for instance in *Rocket Ball*, players use the cables to grab oversize soccer balls and get them into the goal — but the real attraction is the sickly satisfying amount of violence you can inflict on the other jockeys. You can yank opponents from their rockets, clothesline them, even run them down as they try to escape on foot. The graphics are nothing special, but smooth and believable, and the manic gameplay is matched with a 1950's, Hot-Rods-to-Hell-meets-Road-Warrior sensibility, complete with a surf-guitar soundtrack featuring the legendary Dick Dale.

However, as much fun as it is, *Rocket Jockey* is not without disappointment, since the touted multiplayer features that litter the box copy are nowhere to be found. A pack-in slip lets you know they weren't ready and will be available in a downloadable patch. So we're taking one star and we're not giving it back until the patch arrives. Good work Rocket Science, and again, nice surprise.

Rating: ★★★★

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drop mines behind you, or get behind them and chew them up with bumper spikes and machine gun fire. Push them into the rail, or onto a loose mine — there's so many ways to die.

A couple little touches add a lot to the game. Run over spectators and they go down with a little yelp and a squelch, leaving a red smear on the track. Hit a mushroom and the screen gets all wavy and a trippy voice says "Oh, wow man." And yes, you can race against *Duke Nukem*, though that's a bit of a gimmick. He's just one of twenty or so different drivers you'll face, and isn't really in the game in any integral way.

Still, *Death Rally* shows that sometimes the simplest gameplay is often the best. While it's not the most impressive game visually, good design and a sense of what's fun make this one a standout. So whether you buy it in retail or download the shareware first, *Death Rally* is worth a turn.
Rating: ★★★

Hunter Hunted

Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Sierra

Sierra is best known for graphic adventures, such as the *King's Quest* series. However, it has come out with some good titles in other genres, and *Hunter Hunted* is a strong showing in the world of side-scrolling platform shooters.

There are two characters to control through a post-apocalyptic Earth taken over by a cruel alien race. The characters must work their way through levels of burned out civilization, killing enemy



The human character, Jake, contemplates a raging inferno in Sierra's *Hunter Hunted*

robots and gathering weapons and items to stay alive.

The levels are well built, with plenty of puzzles and secret passages. Since the game natively supports more recent gamepads, such as the Microsoft Sidewinder, it's easy to get the thing running, but some of the controls are a bit sticky, and don't expect to have quite as much control as you might have on a similar game for a console system.

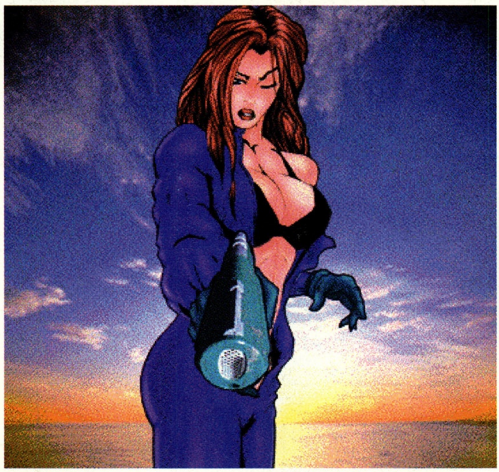
However, the multiplayer aspects (split-screen two-player mode) give plenty of re-playability. It may not be the best platform shooter for the PC, but it's definitely worth some attention.
Rating: ★★★

The Lords of Tantrazz

Publisher: Atlantean Interactive
Developer: dpi

We shouldn't even review this, since it's only a "game" in the most technical sense of the word.

Atlantean is mostly known for its adult, "strip" games; you know, strip poker, strip basketball, strip bowling (no, we're not making this up). Oh, and *Catfight*, a really, really terrible all-female fighting game. *Lords of Tantrazz* is a graphic adventure, kind of, but it's not going to put much of a dent in the genre.



Instead of actually spending money on *Lords of Tantrazz*, just spend about two hours staring at this picture — it's roughly the same experience

Think of *Myst* with hand-drawn, comic book style art, then throw in a female secret agent with enormous breasts and add a liberal dose of gratuitous butt shots and you get the idea. The game is so static it comes across more like a CD-romic than an actual game, especially since you can count the number of puzzles on the fingers of one hand. Most of these are pretty sad matching exercises, and there's little doubt that anyone with any game experience at all can beat this thing in a few hours.

It would be tempting to chalk this up to Atlantean's prior (ahem) "design strategy" behind its strip games, in which the interaction is secondary to the payoff. However, that argument holds water as well as a wicker chair, since the ending isn't even a real ending — it comes to a stop with a "Wait for the exciting conclusion in *Tantrazz II*" message. Insulting. Pathetic.
Rating: ★

Nemesis: A Wizardry Adventure

Publisher: Sir-Tech Software
Developer: Sir-Tech Software

One of the forefathers of today's role-playing games, the *Wizardry* series of RPGs will forever reside in the annals of the best games ever created (just check "The Top 100 Games of All Time," **NG 21**). Riding the *Wizardry* wave of success, and to some extent betraying it, Sir-Tech has come out with a game that's part RPG, part first-person *Myst*-clone adventure.

The interface is manipulated with the mouse, with pointing arrows to control direction, hand-cursors to indicate action objects, and puzzles that require some skill, some observation, and quite a bit of luck. Magic is cast through an amulet of power, with a total of 16 spells, 8 positive for yourself, and 8 negative for the enemy.

The world is huge, and some of the puzzles are actually pretty inventive, such as mating two bugs together to make a swarm that eats a tree. However, too much time is spent underground in a dungeon crawl, and there are too many puzzles that are nearly impossible to solve without help. It's a decent adventure, but nothing close to the standard set by previous *Wizardry* games.
Rating: ★★★



***Nemesis* gamplay involves creatures that see you as a threat**

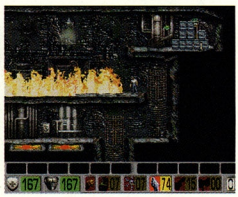
NeoHunter

Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Developer: Ronin Entertainment

This is an awful game.

Looking at the box, you might not think so. It's a cyberpunk action game set in the future, with animation in the style of Japanese anime, and dialogue written by renowned science fiction author Orson Scott Card. But don't be fooled.

The animations throughout look decent, and the plot starts out kind of promising, putting players on the track of the assassin of an important Senator.



When capturing enemies, you'll report in to a variety of police inspectors in *NeoHunter*

It begins to look like the game might have an adventure element, then it doesn't. It's basically just an action game, and a very bad one. Its gameplay is kind of like certain levels in *Rebel Assault*, where guys pop up from behind a 2D background, and players shoot them with the mouse. But at least in *Rebel Assault* you could aim somewhat, even move around a little, and the motion was fluid. Not so here.

The shouted insults, elaborate animations of bad guys, and even story "clues" tossed out in the middle of the fire fight slow the game down intolerably. Throw on a jarring auto-aim feature that zooms the perspective when you shoot at someone far away, and you've devolved what little action there is into pure confusion.

And where is Orson Scott Card's input? We're not sure, but we hope Nebula award-winning authors don't write dialogue like, "Are you called 'Little Head' for what's above your shoulders, or something a little bit lower?"
Rating: ★



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Noir: A Shadowy Thriller

Publisher: Cyberdreams
Developer: TSi

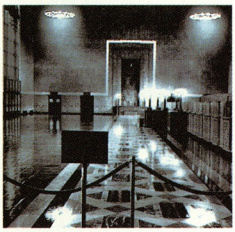
Noir has all of the elements of a good mystery: a missing person, a multitude of suspicious characters, and a somewhat menacing 1940s Los Angeles setting. Play begins in the office of the missing person, a private "dick" named Jack Slayton. Players rummage through Jack's case files, snoop around his personal belongings, and use the information to hop around a variety of settings searching for clues to his whereabouts.

As the title suggests, the overall theme of *Noir* is built around the American cinematic period known as film noir. As far as that goes, the title succeeds in capturing the mood, with well-placed sound effects and striking black-and-white photography — you almost expect to see Barbara Stanwyck appear and start referring to herself as a "broad" or "dame."

All well and good, yet something is missing in the strategy and execution. The game was built in Director, and the nature of game control in such titles is to feign, rather than provide, interaction with characters and the environment. You can't ask direct questions, and you often simply "troll" around looking for hot spots. Also, there's little challenge — indeed, players will be left with underlying feeling of being led to the answers rather than discovering them.

Noir is a mildly entertaining thriller, if only to watch the uptight German butler do his thing in the video sequences, but film noir or mystery fans may be the only ones to really find much value in it.

Rating: ★★



Do not adjust your magazine: *Noir* is in glorious black and white

Westworld 2000

Publisher: Byron Priess Multimedia
Developer: Brooklyn Multimedia

Based on Michael Crichton's film *Westworld*, this game neither entertains as well as the film, nor even contains the same urgency or involved storyline. Basically, this game is about as fascinating as a pair of dirty underwear.

A first-person, 3D shooter, *Westworld 2000* is supposed to lead you through an adventure in three computerized worlds — one set in the Old West (WestWorld), one in medieval Japan (SamuraiWorld), and one set in the far future (OrbitWorld). The idea — and stop us if you've heard this before — is that the computerized population of robots have gone haywire, and you've got to get out before you're killed by them. Each world has its own end-level boss, and there are even a few puzzles to solve.

The idea is fine, it's the execution that hurts. The first-person engine is sluggish, like something developed before even *Wolfenstein 3D*. The delay between a keypress and actual movement is unacceptable, and the graphics are as flat as they come — it feels more like you're dealing with cardboard cutouts than any sort of 3D realm. Avoid this title at all costs.

Rating: ★



Chet, a fellow adventurer in *Westworld 2000*, embodies the feeling of the game — obnoxious, frustrating, and you'll wish it didn't exist

PC

SKIN DEEP



Dark enough to be positively grim and kinked like a garden hose, A Puzzle of Flesh is entertaining enough, helped in no small way by the short loading times of most of the game's sequences and locations. However, it still comes across like a B movie

Phantasmagoria: A Puzzle of Flesh

Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Sierra

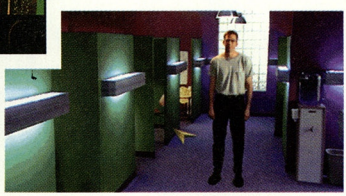
The original *Phantasmagoria* was a big, FMV-based graphic adventure with an interesting story, but none too challenging gameplay. This "sequel" is unrelated in content, but for the most part it's more of the same.

Designer and "screenwriter" Lorlei Shannon takes over from Roberta Williams, and her sensibilities appear to be even more dark and twisted — always a good thing.

The acting isn't bad, and the story is actually quite involving (although the ending leaves a lot to be desired), with a lurid and decidedly kinky edge you don't see much in games. However, don't be pulled in by the "Warning: Intense Content" sticker on the box: trust us, there's nothing here you couldn't find on the shelves at your local video store. In fact, the only "flesh" on display is Monique Parent, who's single topless scene is positively chaste compared to any of several movies you could catch her in, late night on Cinemax.



Some parts are barely interactive at all: click the mouse, watch the FMV, click again, watch more FMV



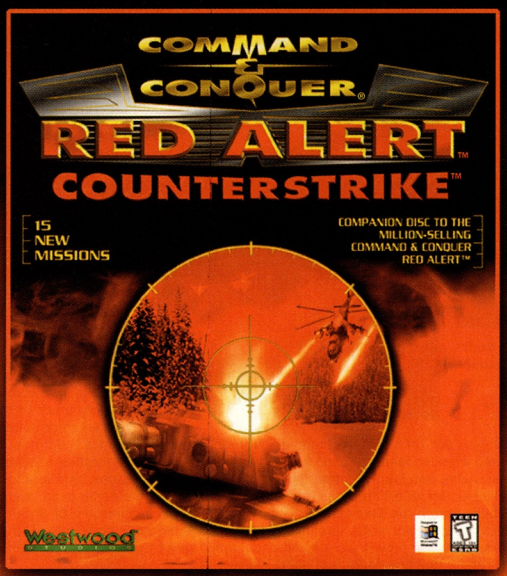
As a game, *A Puzzle of Flesh* features the standard graphic adventure point-and-click interface and gameplay. Sadly, it's no more challenging than the original, and experienced gamers can finish in a day or two. There are some interesting wrinkles: as the main character's psychosis deepens, his computer screen at work, for example, begins flashing subliminal messages like "kill them all" in the background, totally beside the point of the puzzle being worked on. There's a spark of brilliance in this — playing from a madman's perspective gives a taste of madness by proxy — sabotaged ten seconds later when it snaps back to FMV and suddenly you're just watching a movie again.

A Puzzle of Flesh is entertaining, but offers little that's new in terms of gameplay, and in the scheme of things, little you won't have seen in terms of content. Shannon and company should be commended for trying to put the two together, but it's kind of sad that this is what the computer and videogame industry has come to think of as "pushing the envelope" — come on folks, we can do better.

Rating: ★★★

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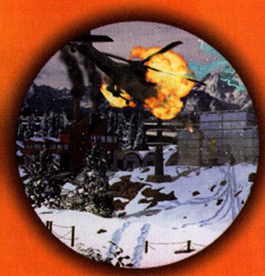
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Arcade

Arcade

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New backgrounds and environments add even more depth to this new title





AM2's newest characters have their own strengths and styles. The sumo-based Taka-rashi puts real, um, weight behind his moves (top)

Virtua Fighter 3

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega AM2

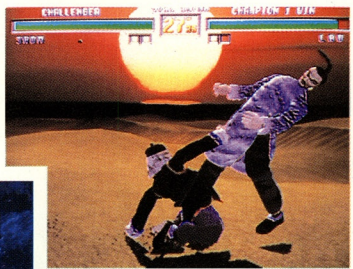
Sega AM2 has taken the time and used its craftsmanship and skill to show what it can really accomplish with a fighting game. *Virtua Fighter 3* is a vast leap over the already excellent previous two incarnations (*VF1* and *VF2*), and is uniquely engrossing and technologically advanced in every way, from its gameplay, to its graphics, backgrounds, characters, and sound effects. This is a gleaming example of what can be achieved in true 3D fighting.

Technologically, the million polygons per second flashing across the screen create mesmerizing, highly detailed characters with movements so close to their motion-capture counterparts, it's a little uncanny. If you look closely, the characters breathe, blink, and their eyes follow their opponents on all axes — nothing like this has ever hit the streets before. What enables *VF3* to stand so high above its predecessors is that the hardware on the Model 3 board is doing much of the rendering work, where previously the Model 2 board forced the actual game software to carry much of the graphics processing load. So little things, like colorful flashes following a kick, are pulled off with ease; a train passing by while you pull off a five-hit combo doesn't slow down the fighting a bit; it is, in a word, stunning.

VF3's two new characters — Sumo wrestler Taka-rashi and kimono-clothed Aoi, aren't interesting enough compared to the others (Jacky, Pai, Kage, Wolf, Lyon, Shun Di, Sarah, Akira, and Lau) to attract new gamers. Aoi initially seems to fade into the background, while Taka-rashi is so big, he's hard to miss, taking up about a fifth of the screen. But each carries the same depth and unique playability all characters of the *Virtua Fighter* pantheon have been known for. Taka-rashi is slow and only slightly reminiscent of *Street Fighter*'s E.Honda, using low pushes, and sumo wrestling-style throws and weight shifts to annihilate his opponents. Aoi's style is hard to pin down, seemingly combining Akido with other martial arts disciplines, and her moves are learned and subtle, unlike the fast aggressive moves of, say Sarah or Jacky. But both characters have plenty of moves and a learning curve that keeps players coming back for many more lessons.

One of the most obvious additions to the game is AM2's inclusion of a new, fourth button. Placed just below and left of the punch button, the Dodge button enables full 3D movement, working both as a defensive move away from attacks, or coupled with other buttons for dodge-and-attack combinations. Opponent tracking is solid, and while opponents see you shifting, they don't immediately follow your every move, so side and rear attacks are possible. This makes *VF3* the first game to fully realize 3D gameplay.

AM2's remarkable work on the backgrounds and various levels is also of the jaw-dropping kind. Several levels feature slopes with inclining terrains, cliffs, nearby trains, reefs, or rafts, and a few others use terrific light-sourcing, making the shadows just as fun to watch as the characters themselves. The sloping environments affect the fighting in different ways, and despite what one would think (and whom one is fighting), it's not always beneficial to be on the upper end of a grade. In one level, an untimely subway train zooming by can mean certain and sudden death to one's opponent. In other cases, the backgrounds are just simply beautiful — Jeffry's small island is so small, characters often fight in shallow water that splashes on their clothes; Aio's waterfall mountain scapes are filled with the sounds of falling water, and misty crevices; Shun Di's level features a multi-platform raft that bobs up and down to true wave patterns. Arenas are bigger, more interesting, interact with fighters in seemingly natural ways, and are far more persuasive in look and feel then any seen previously.





Aoi (below) has a subtle fighting style, in stark contrast to Pai, or the old, drunken master himself, Shun Di (above)

Everyone should play this game. The Model 3 board has enabled the designers to reach deeper and deliver more in graphics and playability than ever before. *Virtua Fighter 3* is surely the new high-water mark by which all other fighters are measured, and which all fighting game developers have to aspire to.

Rating: ★★★★★

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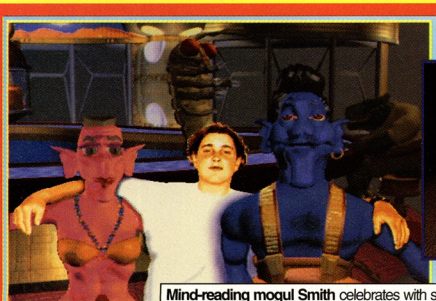
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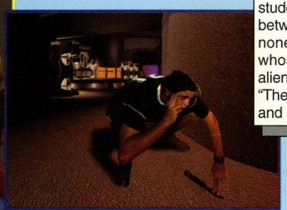
Telepathic Tullahoma teen teams up with drunken spacemen to solve intergalactic crime spree!



TULLAHOMA, TN–It's interplanetary fame for Gerry Smith, 14, a ninth grader who helped save otherworldly beings from a shapeshifting serial killer! Gifted with ESP from birth, Smith was hand-picked by the ETs for his uncanny method of gathering clues–by seeing the past through the eyes of aliens! Is his reward forthcoming? Well, sort of... The aliens agreed to pay Gerry back on *his* terms–with a lifetime supply of pork rinds!

"One minute I'm tearing the wings off flies in my room, the next I'm a space detective for purple people from another planet!" stuttered the stunned high school student. Strangely enough, the liaison between Earth and Armpit VI was none other than Steve Meretzky, whose extensive experience with aliens has been well-documented in "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" and numerous other space epics.





Mind-reading mogul Smith celebrates with soused patrons of the Thirsty Tentacle, the bar where he uncovered multiple clues.

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Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

MacOS

For a free Windows '95 demo or to order The Space Bar direct, call 1.888.SegaSoft

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Just another CD-ROM game where you're a psychic gumshoe detective trying to solve a murder by mind-melding with drunken aliens.

Arcade

ICE COOL



***Gretzky* packs a whollop, and the fights, although few, are lots of fun**

Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey

Publisher: Atari Games
Developer: Atari Games

With less than a month between the arcade and the Nintendo 64 versions of this game, one wonders how the *Wayne Gretzky* coin-op is going to keep gamers coming back.

But when a game has great gameplay and a seamless graphic punch (as this game does), the slots won't be empty for long. The cool things about *Gretzky* are manifold. The coin-op is essentially the arcade mode of the home version, meaning that there is lots of scoring, and plenty of physical play, flaming goals, pucks, and fights. It's got all of the fun of hockey and packs lots of action because, unlike other spots games when you can't catch up — having blown a defensive strategy or a fast attempt at a steal on the far side of the arena — players can press Burst to zip down the ice, catching up to save a goal.

Physics are realistic, and learning the pace and feel of the skaters takes time. If you flip the large, colored puck against the glass, it bounces off with the angle and velocity of a real puck. The same is true if a player falls, gets checked, or cuts a sharp arc across the ice.

Despite being an arcade game, *Gretzky* has four modes of play, Player-selectable Mode (best for tournaments), Pro-sim (a mix of the two), Two-on-Two Mode, and with a couple of codes entered in, Sim Mode (which features lower scoring and tougher defense) is available. Add to this the licensing of both the NHL and NHLPA, all 26 NHL teams, 260 of the best players, the ability to track individual and team statistics throughout a season (gamers' initials can be entered and can be called up over and over again), and one can see the well roundedness of the game shining through. Two levels of cup play (the Stanley Cup and the Van Elderan Cup) and a total of 59 opponents are almost sure to provide gamers with long-term gameplay. Standard moves include passing, shooting, and scoring, and players can check, trip, perform diving blocks, and certainly the best part of any hockey game, they can fight. In fact, players can execute at least two brawling moves — grab punches, and uppercuts.

With great sound effects and four-person play on the list of features, this will be an arcade hockey game against which to measure others.

Rating: ★★★★

Designed for Microsoft Windows 95
TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

What you get to do: Shoot with gun, shoot with D-pad, shoot with D-pad and partner, shoot with gun and partner,

©1997 SegaSoft Inc. All rights reserved. SegaSoft and the SegaSoft logo are trademarks of SegaSoft Inc. Sega is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Sega Saturn is a trademark of Sega. Scud: The Disposable Assassin, the character



Street Fighter EX

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom

What always seemed like a great idea — bringing the *Street Fighter* series into 3D — may not have been so brilliant after all. *Street Fighter EX* is the sort of game where the whole time you're playing you can't help trying to figure out which parts could've been carried out better. The game plays more like a distant cousin to the *Street Fighter* series, although with so much luggage in its background, it probably couldn't ever live up to its expectations.

Gone is the fantastic animation of *Street Fighter*. In *SFEX*, five familiar characters (Guile, Ken, Chun-Li, Zangief and Ryu) are joined by five new ones (C.Jack, Pullum, Hokuto, D.Dark and Skullomania) who look similar to *Tekken* characters: boxy and sharp-edged. The backgrounds are nothing special either, with little *Street Fighter* flavor.

Still, the fighting isn't all bad, and the game is evenly balanced with combos, counters, and the infamous Dragon Punches and fireballs. The new Guard Break system is a welcome addition; it destroys those who prefer to fight in a less than respectable fashion by constantly guarding and making weak attacks. Guard Break blasts straight through guards but costs one unit on the Super Combo Gauge. Some new characters show a little innovation that could even bring a smile to a die-hard *SF* fan: C.Jack pulls out a bat to crush his opponents while D.Dark has a kind of rope and hook that pulls you in if you're not careful.

But in the end, *SFEX* is just kind of sad, with many favorite characters clunkily forced into 3D. But Capcom is at last moving forward, and better games will result through attempts like this.

Rating: ★★



***Street Fighter EX* is a good step into the 3D realm, even if it's not as fun as the Capcom's 2D games. Hopefully future attempts will correct this**

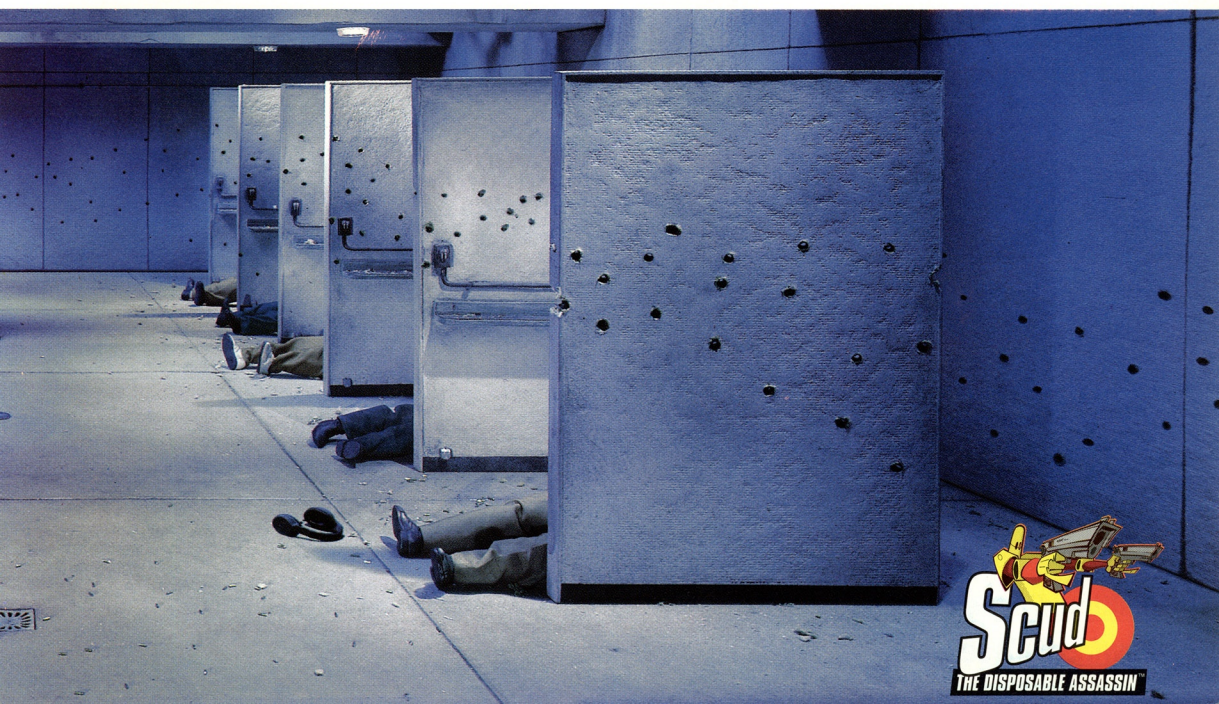
SORRY!

No new games were made available for review this month on the following systems

- Nintendo 64
- 3DO
- Genesis
- Virtual Boy
- Neo Geo
- Macintosh
- Super NES

shoot with D-pad and gun, shoot with gun in each hand. What you don't get to do: Recite poetry, pick daisies, hug lovable stuffed animals.

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Next Generation gamers guide

Every new "next-generation" game, rated for your perusal

The following is a round-up of all the final review scores given to next-generation console games. Titles with the suffix (Japan) are not available in the U.S. Happy hunting...

Title	Publisher	NG Rating
Nintendo 64		
Cruis'n USA	Nintendo	★
Killer Instinct Gold	Nintendo	★★★
Mortal Kombat Trilogy	Williams	★★★
Pilotwings	Nintendo	★★★★
Shadows of the Empire	Nintendo	★★★
Shoji Chess	Nintendo	★★
Super Mario 64	Nintendo	★★★★★
Waverace 64	Nintendo	★★★★★
PlayStation		
Adidas Power Soccer	Psygnosis	★★★
Agile Warrior	Virgin	★★
Air Combat	Namco	★★★
Alien Trilogy	Acclaim	★★★★
Allied General	SSI	★★★★
Alone in the Dark 2	Kokopeli	★★
Aquanaut's Holiday	Sony	★★
Arcade's Greatest Hits	Midway	★★★★
Arc the Lad	Sony	★★
Area 51	Midway	★★
Assault Rigs	Sony	★★
A-Train	Maxis	★★★
Bases Loaded	Jaleco	★
Battle Arena Toshinden	PlayMates	★★★
Battle Arena Tohshinden 2	Sony	★★★
Beyond the Beyond	Sony	★★
Black Dawn	Virgin	★★★★
Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain	Activision	★★★★
Bogey Dead 6	Sony	★★★
Bottom of the Ninth	Konami	★★★★
Boxer's Road	New Corp (Japan)	★★★
Braindead-13	ReadySoft	★★
Bubble Bobble	Acclaim	★★★
Burning Road	Playmates	★★★
Bust-A-Move 2	Acclaim	★★★★
Casper	Interplay	★★★
Chessmaster 3D	Mindscape	★★★★
College Slam	Acclaim	★★
Cool Boarders	Sony	★★★
Cosmic Race	Neorex (Japan)	★
Crash Bandicoot	Sony	★★★
Crime Crackers	Sony (Japan)	★
Criticom	Vic Tokai	★
Cyberia	Interplay	★★
CyberSled	Namco	★★
Cyberspeed	Mindscape	★★
Cyber War	Coco Nuts	★
D	Acclaim	★★★
Dark Stalkers	Capcom	★★★
Deception	Tecmo	★★★
Defcon 5	Data East	★★★
Descent	Interplay	★★★★
Destruction Derby	Psygnosis	★★★
Discworld	Psygnosis	★★★
Die Hard Trilogy	Fox	★★★★
Disruptor	Universal	★★★★
Doom	Williams	★★★★★
Dragon Ball Z	Bandai (Japan)	★★
ESPN Extreme Games	Sony	★★★
Fade to Black	Electronic Arts	★★★★
FIFA Soccer	EA Sports	★★★★
Final Doom	Williams	★★★
The Final Round	Konami	★★
Floating Runner	THQ	★★
Formula 1	Psygnosis	★★★★★
Geom Cube	American Technos	★★
Gex	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Goal Storm	Konami	★★★★
Gridrunner	Virgin	★★★
Gunner's Heaven	Media Vision	★★★★
Gunship	Microprose	★★
Hardball 5	Accolade	★★
Hi Octane	EA	★★
The Hive	Trimark	★★
Horned Owl	Sony	★★★
Impact Racing	Acclaim	★★★
International Track & Field	Konami	★★★★
In the Hunt	THQ	★
In the Zone	Konami	★★★
Iron & Blood	Acclaim	★★
Jet Moto	Sony	★★★★
Johnny Bazookatone	US Gold	★★
Jumping Flash!	Sony	★★★★
Jumping Flash 2	Sony	★★★★
Jupiter Strike	Acclaim	★
Kileak the Blood 2	Sony	★
Kileak:The DNA Imperative	Sony	★★
Killing Zone	Acclaim	★
King's Field (Japan)	From Software	★★
King's Field 2	Asciiware	★★★★
King of Fighters '95	Sony	★★
Krazy Ivan	Psygnosis	★★★
Loaded	Interplay	★★★
Magic Carpet	EA	★★★
Madden '97	EA	★★★★
Mobile Suit Gundam	Bandai (Japan)	★★
Mortal Kombat 3	Williams	★★
Motor Toon Grand Prix	Sony (Japan)	★★
Myst	Psygnosis	★★
Namco Museum, Vol. 1	Namco	★★★★
Namco's Museum, Vol. 2	Namco	★★
Namco's Museum, Vol.3	Namco	★★
Nanotek Warrior	Virgin Games	★★★★
NASCAR Racing	Sierra	★★★
NBA Jam TE	Acclaim	★★★★
NBA Shoot Out	Sony	★★★
NBA In the Zone	Konami	★★
NCAA Gamebreaker	Sony	★★★★
Need for Speed	EA	★★★★
NFL Full Contact	Konami	★★
NFL GameDay '97	Sony	★★★★★
NHL Face Off	Sony	★★★★
NHL Powerplay '96	Virgin	★★★★
Novastorm	Psygnosis	★
Off-World Interceptor Extr.	Crystal Dynamics	★★
Olympic Soccer	US Gold	★★★
Olympic Summer Games	US Gold	★★★
Panzer General	SSI	★★★★
Perfect Weapon	ASC	★★
Persona Revelations	Atlas	★★★
PGA Tour Invitational '96	EA	★★★
Philosoma	Sony	★★
PO'ed	Accolade	★★★
Power Baseball	Konami (Japan)	★
Power Serve 3D Tennis	Ocean	★★
Primal Rage	Time-Warner	★★
Project Overkill	Konami	★★★
Psychic Detective	EA	★
Raiden Project	Sony	★★
Rayman	UbiSoft	★★★★
Reloaded	Interplay	★★
Resident Evil	Capcom	★★★★★
Resurrection: Rise 2	Time-Warner	★
Return Fire	Time Warner	★★★★
Revolution X	Acclaim	★
Ridge Racer	Namco	★★★
Ridge Racer Revolution	Namco	★★★
Road Rash	EA	★★
Robo Pit	THQ	★★★
Robotron X	Midway	★★★
Romance of 3 Kingdoms IV	Koei	★★★
Shellshock	US Gold	★★★
Shockwave Assault	EA Studios	★★
Silverload	Vic Tokai	★★★★
SimCity 2000	Maxis	★★★
Skeleton Warriors	Playmates	★★★
Slam 'n' Jam	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Soviet Strike	EA	★★★★
Space Griffon	Atlus	★
Space Hulk	Electronic Arts	★★★
Space Jam	Acclaim	★
Spot Goes to	Virgin	★
Starblade Alpha	Namco	★
Starfighter	Acclaim	★★★
Star Gladiator	Capcom	★★★
StarWinder	Mindscape	★★★
Steel Harbinger	Mindscape	★★★
Street Fighter Alpha	Capcom	★★★
Street Fighter:The Movie	Capcom	★★
Street Racer	UBI Soft	★★★
Striker	Acclaim	★
Tecmo Super Bowl	Tecmo	★
Tecmo World Golf	Tecmo	★
Tekken	Namco	★★★★
Tekken 2	Namco	★★★★★
Tempest X	Interplay	★★★★
Ten Pin Alley	ASC Games	★★★★
Tetris Plus	Jaleco	★★★
Theme Park	EA	★★★
Thunderstrike 2	US Gold	★★★★
Time Commando	Activision	★★★
Tobal No. 1	Sony	★★★★
Tokyo Highway Battle	Jaleco	★★★
Top Gun: Fire at Will	Spectrum Holobyte	★★
Total Eclipse Turbo	Crystal Dynamics	★★
Triple Play '97	EA Sports	★★★★
Twisted Metal	Sony	★★★
Viewpoint	EA	★
Virtual Pool	Interplay	★★★
VR Soccer	Interplay	★★★
V-Tennis	Acclaim	★★
Warhawk	Sony	★★★★
WipeOut	Psygnosis	★★★★★
Williams Arcade Great. Hits	Williams	★★★★
Wing Commander III	EA	★★★
World Cup Golf	US Gold	★★★
Worms	Ocean	★★★★
WWF Wrestlemania	Acclaim	★★★
X-Com UFO Defense	Microprose	★★★★★
Zero Divide	Time Warner	★★
Zoop	Viacom	★★★
Saturn		
Alien Trilogy	Acclaim	★★★★
Alone in the Dark	T•HQ	★★★
Astal	Sega	★★★
Baku Baku Animals	Sega	★★★★
Bases Loaded '96: DoubleHeader	Jaleco	★
Battle Arena Toshinden Remix	Takara	★★★
Battle Monsters	Naxat Soft	★★
Blackfire	Sega	★★★
Bubble Bobble w/		


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PlayStation
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Title	Publisher	NG Rating
Rainbow Islands	Acclaim	★★★
Bug!	Sega	★★
Bust-a-Move 2: Arcade Ed.	Acclaim	★★★
Casper: The Movie	Interplay	★★★
Center Ring Boxing	JVC	★★
Clockwork Knight	Sega	★★
Clockwork Knight 2	Sega	★★★
College Slam	Acclaim	★★
Congo The Movie: The Lost City of Zinj	Sega	★★
Corpse Killer: Graveyard Ed.	Digital Pictures	★
Creature Shock: Special Ed.	Data East	★
Criticom	Vic Tokai	★
Cyberia	Interplay	★★
Cyberspeed	Mindscape	★★
D	Acclaim	★★★
Darius Gaiden	Acclaim	★★
Dark Legends	Data East	★★
Daytona USA	Sega	★★★★
Daedalus	Sega	★★★
Decathlete	Sega	★★★★
Defcon 5	Data East	★★★
Double Switch	Digital Pictures	★★
Earthworm Jim 2	Playmates	★★★
FIFA '96	Electronic Arts	★★★★★
Fighting Vipers	Sega	★★★★★
F1 Challenge	Virgin	★★★
F1 Live Information	Sega (Japan)	★★★
Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball	Acclaim	★★★
Galactic Attack	Acclaim	★★★
Galaxy Fight	Acclaim	★★
Gex	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Ghen War	Sega	★★★
Golden Axe: The Duel	Sega	★★
Gotha	Sega	★★★
Gran Chaser	Sega	★★★
Greatest 9Baseball	Sega (Japan)	★★★★
Guardian	Sega	★★★
Gun Griffon	Sega	★★★
Hang-On GP '95	Sega	★★★
Hi-Octane	EA	★★
High Velocity	Atlus	★★★
The Horde	Crystal Dynamics	★★
Impact Racing	Acclaim	★★
In the Hunt	T•HQ	★
Iron Storm	Working Designs	★★★★
Johnny Bazookatone	US Gold	★★
Krazy Ivan	Sega	★★
Last Gladiators	Kaze Co	★★★★
Legend of Oasis	Sega	★★★★
Loaded	Interplay	★★★
Magic Carpet	EA	★★★★
Mansion of Hidden Souls	Sega	★★★
Minnesota Fats: Pool Legend	Data East	★
Mortal Kombat II	Acclaim	★★★
Myst	SunSoft	★★
NBA Action '96	Sega	★★
NBA Jam TE	Acclaim	★★★
The Need For Speed	EA	★★★★
NFL Quarterback Club '96	Acclaim	★★
NFL Quarterback Club '97	Acclaim	★★★
NFL '97	Sega	★
NHL All-Star Hockey	Sega	★★
NHL Powerplay '96	Virgin	★★★★★
Nights	Sega	★★★★★
Night Warriors: Darkstalkers' Revenge	Capcom	★★★
Off-World Interceptor	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Olympic Soccer	U.S. Gold	★★★
Panzer Dragoon	Sega	★★★★
Panzer Dragoon II Zwei	Sega	★★★★
Pebble Beach Golf Links	Sega	★★★
Primal Rage	TWI	★★
Quarterback Attack	Digital Pictures	★★★
Quarterback Club '97	Acclaim	★★★
Rayman	Ubi Soft	★★★

Title	Publisher	NG Rating
Revolution X	Acclaim	★
Riglord Saga	Sega	★★★
Rise 2: Resurrection	Acclaim	★
Road Rash	EA	★★
Robo-Pit	Kokopelli	★★★
Robotica	Acclaim	★
Romance of the Three Kingdoms IV: Wall of Fire	Koei	★★★
Saturn Bomberman	Hudson	★★★★
Sega Rally Championship	Sega	★★★★★
Shanghai: Triple Threat	Activision	★★★
Shellshock	US Gold	★★★
Shining Wisdom	Working Designs	★★★
Shin Shinobi Den	Sega	★★★
Shockwave Assault	EA	★★
SimCity 2000	Maxis	★★★
Skeleton Warriors	Playmates	★★★
Slam 'N' Jam 96	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Solar Eclipse	Crystal Dynamics	★★
Space Hulk: Vengeance of the Blood Angels	EA	★★★
Star Fighter	Acclaim	★★
SteamGear Mash	Takara	★★
Street Fighter: The Movie	Acclaim	★★★
Street Fighter Alpha	Capcom	★★★
Street Fighter Alpha II	Capcom	★★★★
Striker	Acclaim	★
Tama	Tengen	★★
Tetris Plus	Jaleco	★★★
Theme Park	EA	★★★
3D Baseball	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Three Dirty Dwarves	Sega	★★★
True Pinball	Ocean	★★★
Thunderstrike 2	US Gold	★★★★
Torico (Gekkamugentan-Torico in Japan)	Sega	★★★★
Toshinden URA	Sega	★
Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3	Williams	★★★
Valora Valley Golf	Vic Tokai	★★
Virtua Copy 2	Sega	★★★★
Virtual Hydlide	Atlus	★★
Virtual Volleyball	Imagineer	★
Virtua Cop	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter	Sega	★★★
Virtua Fighter Kids	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter Remix	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter 2	Sega	★★★★★
Virtua Racing	Time Warner	★★★
Virtual Open Tennis	Acclaim	★★★
Wicked 18	Vic Tokai	★★★
Wing Arms	Sega	★★★
Winning Post	Koei	★★
Wipeout	Sega	★★★★
World Cup Golf: Pro Edition	US Gold	★★★
World Series Baseball	Sega	★★★★
World Series Baseball II	Sega	★★★★★
Worldwide Soccer	Sega	★★★
Worldwide Soccer 2	Sega	★★★★★
Worms	Ocean	★★★
WWF Wrestlemania: The Arcade Game	Acclaim	★★★
X-Men: Children of the Atom	Capcom	★★★

For your information

Here's what the ratings signify:

★★★★★ Revolutionary
★★★★ Excellent
★★★ Good
★★ Average
★ Bad

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fight cyber rats, mantises and wasps. Needless to say, you're not an itsy bitsy spider.



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KIDS TO ADULTS
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation

NEXT GENERATION AND PC GAMER PROUDLY PRESENT...

THE SENTIENT™ CONTEST

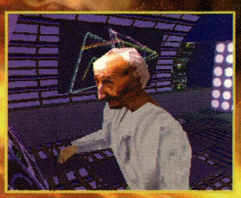
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WIN A LUXURY TRIP TO ENGLAND!

Okay, hands up, who wants a luxury trip to merry old England. All of you? Jolly good, because that's exactly what Psygnosis is offering to one lucky *PC Gamer* or *Next Generation* reader to celebrate the upcoming release of its amazing new roleplaying adventure game, *Sentient*.

The lucky winner of the *Sentient* Contest grand prize will be whisked away to the UK, cradle of civilization (or so says our editor-in-chief) and home of Psygnosis for a luxury tour of the company's high-tech headquarters and a chance to meet the *Sentient* development team. But that's just for openers. The entire trip lasts for five nights, the first two in Liverpool where Psygnosis is based, then three nights in London, including a trip to the 25th Annual Reading Festival, the world's largest alternative rock festival! And each and every night, you'll be put up in a first-class hotel and be chauffered around for the whole trip accompanied by a Psygnosis representative. In other words, you will be treated like a god, except you won't actually be able to smite anybody. Plus you'll be going in the summer so it won't be raining too much (*Ha! — editor-in-chief*). For runners-up prizes, Psygnosis is giving away a 17" Sony PC monitor (just like the ones we have at *Next Generation*), a sack full of PC games, and some exclusive Psygnosis CD-ROM carrying cases.

All you have to do to enter is scribble your name and address on a postcard and send it, no later than April 30, 1997, to:

***PC Gamer/Next Generation Sentient* Contest,**
P.O. Box 418, Brisbane, CA 94005

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Contest open to legal U.S. residents. TO ENTER, print your name, address, city, state, zip code, age and telephone number on a 3" x 5" card and mail to: PC Gamer *Sentient* Contest, Imagine Publishing, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. Limit one entry per person. All entries must be received by 4/30/97. All entries become the property of Psygnosis, Inc. and none will be returned. Psygnosis, Inc. accepts no responsibility for incomplete, illegible, lost, late or misdirected entries by mail. THE PRIZES: One (1) Grand Prize Trip for two to Liverpool for 2 nights to meet the developer of the *Sentient* game and visit Psygnosis United Kingdom headquarters, and London for 3 nights to attend the Annual Reading Festival. Trip includes round trip coach airline tickets for 2 persons from the major continental U.S. commercial airport nearest to the winner's home, 5 nights first class hotel accomodations (double occupancy), rail transport from Liverpool to London, 3 day admission to the Annual Reading Festival, transportation to and from the festival for all 3 days and transportation between the airport and hotel, and all hotel sales taxes. All meals, ground transportation and incidentals not specified her ein are the sole responsibility of the winner (Approximate Retail Value $5,000.00). Additional prizes for entries received from *PC Gamer* readers only include one 17" Sony computer monitor (ARV $799.00); one of ten Psygnosis PC games (ARV $69.00); and one of twenty CD carrying cases (ARV $15.00). Additional prizes for entries received from *Next Generation* readers only include one 27" Sony television (ARV $699.00); one of ten Psygnosis PlayStation games (ARV $49.00); and one of twenty CD carrying cases (ARV $15.00). Limit one prize per family or address. Contest open to all, except employees of Psygnosis, Inc., Psygnosis Ltd., and their parent and affilia ted companies, subsidiaries, retailers, advertising agencies, promotion agencies and the immediate families of each. The prizes will be awarded and the Grand Prize winner will be notified by mail. Prize winner will be randomly selected from all eligible entries received. Drawing will be held on or about 5/15/97 — all decisions a re final. Grand Prize Winner will be required to execute and return within 15 days of notification postmark an Affidavit of Eligibility and Release. If completed Affidavit is not received within 15 days, or if prize notification is undeliverable, an alternate winner will be selected. By entering the sweepstakes, entrants accept and agree to be bound by these rules and the decision of the judges which shall be final. If a minor wins a prize, it will be awarded in the name of his/her parent or legal guardian. Odds of winning depend on the total number of eligible entries received. Psygnosis, Inc. reserved the right to substitute prize of equal value if prize is unavailable. No substitutes or transfer or prizes allowed. Taxes are the sole responsibility of the winners. Offer void where prohibited or restricted by national, state or local laws. By submitting an entry, a potential winner aggrees to allow use of his/her likeness and/or photograph for advertising this or similar promotions wit hout compensation unless otherwise prohibited by law.

Don't bottle in your feelings! Express yourself. We're here to listen to *you*. Write us at **Next Generation** Letters, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. Fax us: (415) 468-4686. E-mail us: ngonline@imagine-inc.com. We read all of our mail.



Check and turn the signal to the write

In your November 1996 issue, you reviewed *Beyond The Beyond*. I agree with your review of this game, but you compared *Beyond the Beyond* with *Final Fantasy 7* and *King's Field*. However, *Final Fantasy 7* is not finished.

Even though **Next Gen** may know all about *FF7* work in process, the average Joe like me can't find the finished version of *FF7* sitting on the shelf.

Steve Pusztai
pusztai@ix.netcom.com

Isn't that our job? Because we spend our working days chasing down this stuff, we get to see



***Beyond the Beyond* can be compared to *FF7* (above)**

games before gamers on the street — and we pass this information on to **NG**'s readers. Granted, it may be frustrating to read about games you can't buy — but again, that's why we're in business. In the example you mention, because there have been so few console RPGs and because *Final Fantasy 7* has generated so much interest, it seems ridiculous to try and evaluate *Beyond the Beyond* without mentioning Square's long-awaited offering also, even if it isn't on store shelves yet.

My PlayStation appears to be skipping. When I start any game the screen shakes up and down cutting about an inch off of the screen with each skip. Have you ever heard of this problem? Do you know of any way to fix it? Your feedback would be most appreciated.

Craig Lyon
cozmo@expert.cc.purdue.edu

Yes, increasingly we're hearing from more and more readers who are finding that their PlayStation disc drives are "skipping." Typically, it's the first batch of U.S. PlayStations that seem to cause the most trouble. Please, if any other readers are in the same situation as Craig, let us know. If this adds up to a serious problem, we'll try and find out what Sony intends doing about it.

Final Doom's release for the PlayStation was accompanied by full-page advertising in most of the major gaming magazines (including **NG 23**). In these ads, the game was described as having "two new 32-level episodes." Well imagine my surprise when three weeks and $63.59 later, I find that the game includes only 30 of the promised levels! 30 out of 64!

This is not the first time these liars have ripped me off. The box of the *Doom/Doom II* — Special PlayStation Edition promised the complete and unedited *Doom* and *Doom II* levels. Wrong. Not only were many of the levels scaled-down, but several *Doom II* monsters were AWOL.

Doom/Doom II was a close enough copy that I kept it. However, I would be returning *Final Doom* for a refund, if my 10-day return window hadn't already elapsed. But since it has, I'm stuck with it.

Am I the only one who's tired of getting ripped-off by Williams/id Software?

Tony Taylor
pepperk@mint.net

Williams? Id? Your responses?

I have a correction to make regarding your alpha preview of *Wave Race 64* in **NG 23**. The technical Information seems to be accurate and factual. However, you pluralized Canada Goose incorrectly. The proper pluralization is "Canada Geese" not Canadian Geese (a common mistake). You are forgiven. Keep up the good work, but in the future please treat our indigenous waterfowl with some respect.

Ed Robertson
bnaked@passport.ca

It could have been worse. We could have said Canadian Geeses (or Canadian Gooses). But apologies to any Canada Geese who may be reading. We wouldn't want to provoke any unnecessary egg-laying.

How come all articles, reviews/previews, and specials are cryptically signed "ng"? I know which magazine I'm reading. How about crediting the author(s)?

darshan@concentric.net

The **ng** you see at the end of pages (with any luck, there should be one in the bottom right hand corner of page 110) is not meant to be the author's name, but a design device to let you know when you've come to the end of a piece (and that the story doesn't continue over the page, or later on).

There are three main reasons why **Next Generation** doesn't mention who writes each piece:

1) Each member of the **Next Generation** team stands behind every word that appears in the magazine. We all take responsibility for making sure the whole magazine is fair and accurate — not just the bits that have their names on.

2) Often, two or three people will collaborate on the same piece (someone may write the main text, and someone else puts captions on the pictures, for example), so a name on the piece would be misleading anyway.

3) **NG**'s writers don't feel the need to have their egos massaged — they'd rather promote the idea of the magazine being the authoritative source of gaming information, not them individually.

In response to Timothy Kish's letter regarding "adult" language in **NG 24**, I would like to thank and congratulate Tim for his level-headed argument against swearing. He holds his position with poise and integrity, and I

corresponding

hope I can disagree with him with as much grace.

I agree that swearing for swearing's sake detracts from the overall legitimacy of any spoken or printed word, and that outright "flaming" is for the ignorant and uneducated. You are correct in that these idiots only prove your eloquent point further.

However, swear words can enhance mood, attitude, and character. If you don't believe me, go see a production of the play "Tenement," or "K2." Shakespeare was even known to have his characters swear profusely on occasion. I would hardly think that these words cheapened or detracted from the overall appeal of legendary literature and theatre.

OK, no marketing company's copy can compare to the works of the world's best playwrights, but advertisers attempt to connect the product to the reader with words. Writers are paid to come up with tag-lines for these advertisements. A small phrase can make or break a product. "Blow the living shit out of your enemies" is designed to evoke an emotional response from the reader. It shocks you, gets your adrenaline pumping, and more importantly, conveys a truthful message regarding the content of the game.

These swear words are just that: words. Asking them to be removed from an adult magazine is censorship, plain and simple, and censorship hurts everyone, from the advertiser to the publisher to the reader. Once **NG** submits to censorship, no game magazine will enable adult content to flow across their pages. I'm asking for a little tolerance from readers like Timothy. One swear word every once in a while is tolerable.

Steve Bowler
monolithgrp@earthlink.net

Steve's letter is perhaps the most eloquent defense of the use of "adult" language we have received. It would seem, however, that he is in the minority. The following response from Aaron Williamson is typical of the correspondence we got on the subject:

What **Next Generation** terms "adult language" in **NG 24** is exactly the opposite. Such language is most often used by ignorant adolescents who see such language as a form of rebellion. It appears in usenet posts written by feebs who use their parents' accounts to assault intelligent people who make worthwhile contributions to the discussion.

Speaking as an adult, I feel insulted and disgusted that you feel you have to use such language to reach me and my peers. The "juvenile minority" that responded to Timothy Kish is sadly becoming a majority. Could this be due to a decline in the standards of the media? Maybe you should think about that.

Aaron Williamson
aaron@in.net

So, how about this compromise:

In your response to Philippe Zautke about the language used in a game review, you said "**Next Generation** is aimed at the older, more sophisticated gamer..." and are treating them as such and "this occasionally does include adult language."

Which older, more sophisticated gamers? 17-year-olds? An adult can converse without cursing constantly. I find it hard to see how it truly adds to any review of a game. Adding this, or failing to alter it, in articles is merely done for shock value. Children may find it titillating, but it distracts from the content. And that is why you want people to buy your magazine, isn't it?

Demand you remove such language? No. Request you confine it to quotes from people? Yes. Renew my subscription? It's doubtful. I guess I'm just not sophisticated enough for you.

BJ Gullotto
Gullotto@aol.com

OK, we've reached a useful compromise here. **NG** will accept advertisements with "mild" swear words and will faithfully quote interviewees — the individual can choose to swear or not, and it's our duty to our readers to report what's been said. But we will refrain from adding our own swear words to the magazine — they probably aren't necessary.

So, settled. We should be proud of ourselves. **Next Generation** is for its readers — and it is only fair that our readers set the tone for **NG**'s content. We warn you all,



Next Generation hereby swears that it won't swear

though, if this doesn't work out, we're gonna introduce Brendan Baber's idea:

You're in a tight spot, with some readers demanding you remove profanity from your mag, and others regarding it as a shot at free speech if you do. But please do not strain any more. I have a solution, upsetting neither the blue-ribbon, free-speechers, nor fainthearted, white-bread, anti-cussing, soldiers of God.

You should increase your use of profanity, with obscure and outdated words. Who could object to your saying that the management at Sega must be composed of "fustigating tribades"? Or that all of the bosses in *Quake* bear a striking resemblance to "rugose cunnies"? Only the most sensitive soul could take offense if you declared *Mario 64* to be not only the greatest video game of all time, but "sapphic" to boot. I remain in this, as in all things, your most humble & obedient servant,

Brendan Baber
HerrBaber@aol.com

Sir, you are a bopplescopic trankershnozzle, and we kipplesquick you. ng

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete: Tom Valentino, VP/Operations & CFO

Next Month

M2

The world's first pictures of Matsushita's 64-bit game machine

Next Generation #28
on sale March 11, 1997.

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